THE PRESBYTERIAN PULPIT

THE SINLESS CHRIST



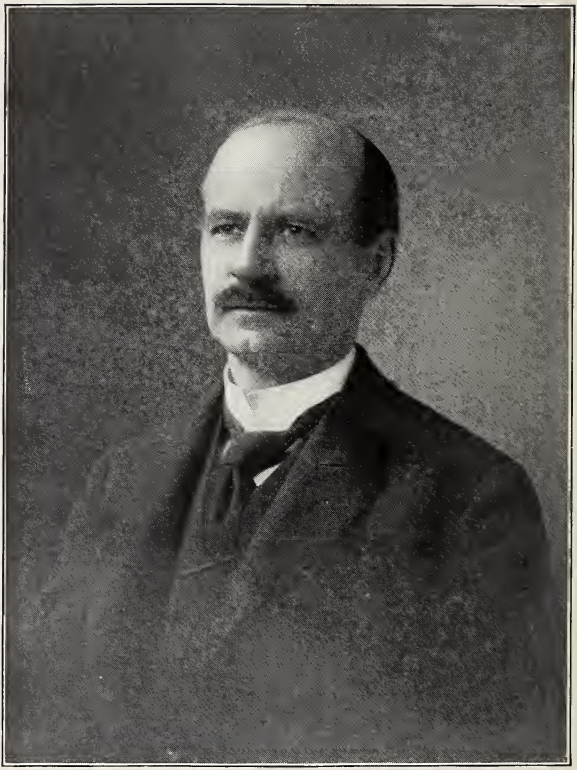
BY
GEORGE TYBOUT PURVES
D.D.LL.D.



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THE SINLESS CHRIST



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GEORGE TYBOUT PURVES, D.D., LL.D.

The Presbyterian Pulpit

THE SINLESS CHRIST

BY

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Late Pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York,
Sometime Professor in Princeton Theological Seminary

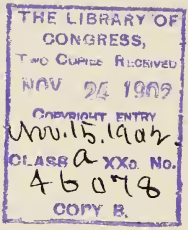


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INTRODUCTION

The sermons contained in this volume cannot fairly be called sermons preached by Dr. Purves. He prepared full notes. In preaching, however, he was absolutely independent of them, and many of the most impressive passages of his discourses had never been written. But, as he closely adhered in the pulpit at many points to the language of the outline written in his study, these discourses will enable the readers who heard him preach on their texts to recall the sermons as he delivered them.

Those who, like the writer of this Introduction, listened to Dr. Purves regularly as his parishioners know that he was an exceptionally great preacher. Underlying his preaching was the Christian "theory of the universe." To this theory he had given and was always giving the careful study and reflection of a large, disciplined and energetic mind. As he apprehended

it, it was self-consistent, justified by reason and in harmony with his religious experience. It was his strongest, most distinct and most cherished intellectual conviction.

During his entire professional life he was a close, scientific and enthusiastic student of the Bible, and of the New Testament in particular. He had a brilliant career for eight years as Professor of New Testament Literature and Exegesis in Princeton Theological Seminary. He knew the later Scriptures as few men know them. He received them as the absolutely truthful and inspired record of God's gracious revelation to sinful men, and as the infallible rule of religious faith and life.

His religious life was sincere and simple. The trait which those near to him would probably call distinguishing and out-standing was his affectionate loyalty to Jesus Christ, his Redeemer, Lord and Friend.

He was a man of high intellectual tastes and wide and various intellectual interests. He was a cultivated man who loved good and great books. But these tastes, strong as they were, were reso-

lutely subordinated to his sympathy with his fellow-men, his affection for them and his active interest in their spiritual well-being. This affectionate interest finely revealed itself in his work as a Christian pastor. I never knew a better pastor than Dr. Purves was when in Princeton.

He had a great gift of speech. I have heard him more than once when he was compelled to speak with no time at all for preparation and had to throw himself upon his reserve of culture. At these times he surprised and delighted me by the spontaneous methodizing of his mind, and the clearness and grace of his speech. I never heard him speak when his own emotions and the emotions of his audience were not stirred. He spoke with fervor and energy, which the hearer felt as power.

To say that these were the gifts, convictions, attainments and method of a man is to call him a great didactic Christian orator. But no catalogue will explain the consummate charm of Dr. Purves as a preacher. The living whole was far greater than the sum of all the parts. We, whom he instructed and inspired, while we rejoice that some

of his discourses are given to the public, cannot help regretting that many of those who will obtain from this volume new strength to do and bear and undergo and overcome, did not enjoy the high privilege which was ours when he opened unto us the Scriptures.

JOHN DEWITT.

PRINCETON, October 23, 1902.

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I

THE SINLESS CHRIST

THE SINLESS CHRIST

I

THE SINLESS CHRIST[1]

"For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."—HEB. vii. 26.

WHATEVER makes the person of Jesus Christ vividly real to our thoughts helps us in our daily lives. Practical Christianity finds a mighty stimulus in trusting, contemplating, understanding, and following Him; for in so doing we learn to live with God and for man. He is the personal center of our religion, the living revelation of truth and life, the magnet by which we are drawn heavenward, the One in and by whom salvation becomes an actual possession. Yet thus vividly and truthfully to apprehend Him is not easy. Being invisible, He does not stand so clearly before us as do other objects which address themselves to our senses. The historical distance from us of His

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earthly career is apt to make His figure indistinct. Even our dogmatic conceptions of His person and work sometimes become formal and lifeless, though intended to interpret Him, and though correctly expressing what we should believe about Him. It ought, therefore, to be our effort constantly to repaint His figure upon the canvas of our thought, to turn upon Him the light of experience and research, of comparison and analysis, that fresh ideas of His unspeakable glory may daily dawn upon our minds, delight our hearts, and cause us to give Him all the admiration and devotion of which we may be capable.

Now, in the words of our text, we have briefly described the moral purity of Jesus, the sinless, unspotted excellence of His personal character. The language is very vivid. It shows the profound impression which Jesus made on the first generation of disciples—the immediate reflection of the impression made on those who came into direct contact with Him. The words breathe the realism of personal acquaintance. They do not enlarge upon what all knew, but they express very beautifully the sense of ineffable purity and holiness, of infinite moral superiority, which the disciples received from Him whose very presence had revealed a new and heavenly life. He was

"holy"; and the Greek word is not the common one for a thing set apart for sacred usage, but a word less often employed and indicative of an exquisitely pure and lofty character, one that realized and discharged all its obligations. He was "harmless," *i. e.*, thoroughly good, gentle, benevolent, tender-hearted, and true. Out of Him as they remembered Him, no harm ever proceeded. No evil ever issued from act or word of His. Nothing but good came from Him. When we remember how much we influence one another, and how much evil goes forth even from the best of us, to counterbalance not a little of the good we do, we shall appreciate the character of the One of whom it could be said by those who knew Him best, that He was, as He bade them to be, "harmless as a dove." Further, He was "undefiled"—untainted by the corruption of the world in which He dwelt, unspotted by the passions which left a stain even on apostles. In short, He was "separate from sinners." Some would take these words with those that follow, "made higher than the heavens," and understand them to describe our Lord as now separated at the right hand of God from the world of sinners, even as the high priest in the most holy place was separated from the multitude for whom He made

atonement. But I judge it more natural to see in these words another phrase to describe Christ's personal character. He was separated from sinners. The disciples who stood nearest to Him felt that there was a great chasm between His spotless soul and theirs. He was on a plane above them. His motives and purposes were unlike theirs. And this, although in other respects He was so near to them and so truly man. He had laid hold, as this epistle says, on the seed of Abraham. He was touched with the feeling of their infirmities. He was full of sympathy and friendship. He understood them. He took them by the hand. He wept over their griefs and rejoiced in their joys. Yet He was evidently as far above them as the gleaming stars were higher than the water in which their brilliance was reflected. He was the friend of publicans and harlots, and yet He was "separate from sinners."

Could any language more forcibly express the sense which the disciples had of their Master's sinlessness? As I have said, the words indicate the realism of personal acquaintance. They do not speak in the language of the schools. They do not measure Christ's worth by formal standards. They are the outcome of personal adoration and unspeakable reverence for One whose

character and life had been to those who knew Him the disclosure of the absolutely good.

Now I desire to enable you, if possible, to realize afresh the sinlessness of Jesus Christ by suggesting certain considerations which ought to make it very clear and very astonishing to our minds. I would exalt your sense of His personal perfection,—unlike that of any other character who ever has appeared in the history of our race,—and I would do it, not by a formal proof of the doctrine, but by setting His life in its surroundings, with the hope that the same impression may be made on our minds as on those who knew Him first.

1. Consider, then, that in all the records which we have of the Lord Jesus there is not the slightest betrayal by Him of the least degree of the consciousness of sin. We have a sufficiently complete record to justify us in saying that this is a fact. We see Him in most trying hours. We hear Him pray. We listen to His teaching on religious themes. We hear Him reprove others. We catch glimpses of Him in private as well as in public. We know that He spoke often about Himself. But in all the life of Christ we never hear any confession of unworthiness or any longing after holiness, nor discover any indication what-

ever that He felt Himself in the least degree touched by sin.

The significance of this will appear if we recall two other facts, one of experience, the other of history.

The first is that, as a matter of universal experience, the more spiritual a man becomes the more does he feel himself a sinner and unworthy of fellowship with God. The progress of man's moral life commonly consists in the awakening and sharpening of his conscience. He becomes more keenly aware of moral obligations. He sees them where before he saw them not. He analyzes more thoroughly his motives and classifies more correctly his duties. He becomes more sensitive to the demands made upon his conscience, just as progress in other departments of activity consists in the refinement of our powers and the larger perception of the objects on which they were meant to terminate. This is the law of the moral and spiritual life of man. He is at first a child, and, like a child, takes in only a few facts, feels his obligations in but a few directions. Some men never grow beyond this stage. Though their intellects may be cultured and their bodies strengthened, their moral faculties remain undeveloped. Then conscience is apt to become a

mere scourge, driving to unloved duty; a nightmare, affrighting with threats of torment. But just so far as the spiritual life of man has blossomed and flowered, so far has his sensitiveness to evil increased, his recognition of it brightened and clarified, his consciousness of its presence in him become more intense, and his longings after freedom from it become stronger. Witness in proof of this the hymns of all religions, and especially the hymns of Christendom. Witness the advance of social morality, taking in, as it has gradually done, matters that were once thought quite indifferent. Read the confessions of the purest men and women who ever have lived. Those that have risen highest have felt themselves the lowest. And this has not been a delusion with them; they have only seen more clearly. A villainous murderer went to the scaffold saying that he looked on his life as a whole with much satisfaction, and felt that, with the trifling exception of a murder, he had tried to do right by all men. Augustine wrote, "The dwelling of my soul is in ruins; do Thou restore it. There is that in it which must offend thine eyes; I confess and know it: but who will cleanse it?" Such are fair examples. Who of us that tries to love God does not know the same thing from his own experience? As

Christian life proceeds, as its insight becomes clearer, as its consciousness deepens and is purified, it becomes more and more ready to say with the Scripture, "In my flesh there dwelleth no good thing," and to repeat confessions at which the world sometimes stands amazed. Just in proportion as man's moral life advances does he feel that he is not worthy even to gather up the crumbs that fall from the festal table which the grace of God has spread.

But lo! the one Person who by act and word gave evidence of the most spiritual life was absolutely without this element of mind. He had the clearest insight into moral duties. His words are still recognized as embodying the loftiest ethics. His character is held worthy of universal imitation. He loved to pray. He talked with God as though he saw Him. Yet, unlike every other man of spiritual insight who ever lived, he never betrayed any sense of unworthiness or of need of greater holiness.

This stands out still more remarkably when we associate it with the historical fact that in the Jewish world in which Jesus lived the sense of sin and of general apostasy from God was specially strong among awakened minds. Jesus lived in the age when John cried to all Israel, "Repent!"

and with prophetic zeal unveiled the monstrous corruption of the church and nation. But John himself very plainly confessed his own unworthiness. Speaking of the Messiah, he said, "His shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." So, likewise, those men who followed Jesus were very emphatic in their confessions of sin. Peter cried, "I am a sinful man, O Lord." The centurion said, "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof." Paul called himself "the chief of sinners." Wherever Christ or his gospel went men were awakened in an eminent degree to the fact of sin, and were led to confess that, even if believers, they were only beginning to aspire to that holiness without which they felt that no man can see the Lord.

But again, amid this whole movement and as the vital center of it, the Lord Jesus never betrayed the slightest consciousness of wrong. If He had been the product of the same influences which molded the rest, He would have been the loudest in His confessions. But not an accent of penitence fell from His lips. How does the consciousness of sin show itself? With some in fear, causing them to turn away from God and dread to think of Him, much more to pray. With others it assumes the form of bravado, leading them to

boldly dare the consequences of their misdeeds. These effects, however, are seen in characters which cannot possibly be compared with Christ's. With good men, on the other hand, who have been awakened to a sense of sin, it shows itself in expressions of repentance, in prayers for forgiveness, in longings after holiness, in acknowledgment of the unmerited grace of God; sometimes in painful acts of self-denial and asceticism, which are supposed to compensate for transgression or to extinguish the power of evil. But none of these things are discoverable in Jesus. Though He called others to repent, He Himself never expressed repentance. He never asked to be forgiven, though He taught us to ask it. On the contrary, we find Him rejoicing in the assurance of His Father's eternal love, delighting in communion with God, and finally openly challenging His enemies on this very point: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Nor is there any trace of development in His spiritual life, but, from the first and to the last, the utter absence of the consciousness of sin appears in Him. The Buddha claimed to reach perfection, but only as the result of a long and painful process of self-purification. Christ appears as free from the sense of sin in the beginning of His career as amid its close.

Is not this a life which stands alone in all history? Try to imagine, if it be possible on the ordinary suppositions of human experience, how one could be gifted with such spiritual discernment and yet see no flaw in himself, if there was a flaw. How could one teach such high and pure morals without confessing his own shortcomings, if he did come short? How could one dwell so near to the divine Father and never ask to be forgiven sin, which that Father hates, if there was any sin to be forgiven? I ask you to think of this, not from the standpoint of the deity of Christ in which we believe, but from the standpoint of His humanity. Conceive the impression which He must have made upon those about Him. Realize that He was an actual living person. Then you will appreciate the fact that in all the record of His life there is not a trace of the slightest sense of sin. "If I should say, I know not the Father," said Jesus to the Pharisees, "I should be a liar like unto you: but I know Him and keep His sayings." "I do always those things which please Him." Such expressions, imbedded in such a life, form a unique fact in the history of moral teaching.

2. There are only two ways by which those who doubt these facts can evade the force of the

evidence. The first is by saying that the record in the gospels is not true, but that the disciples exaggerated the character of their Master, embellished His virtues, and forgot His faults. To reply to this objection would lead us too far afield. It involves the whole question of the credibility of the Gospels. But I may point out in passing that the Gospels do describe Christ's weakness and weariness, His struggles with temptation, and His agony in the garden. They evince no disposition, therefore, to idealize the character of Jesus or to hide His genuine humanity. On the other hand, they do not, except in the prologue to the fourth Gospel, bring out the formal doctrine about Him which the apostles themselves believed, nor do they impute to the Master the theological language which later revelations would have justified. They have therefore all the appearance of honest histories. They confirm one another. They are themselves confirmed by the epistles. The very simplicity of their story attests their historical veracity.

The other way to escape the natural inference from the facts of which we have been speaking is to say that Jesus was under an hallucination, that His enthusiasm made Him blind to His own defects. So Renan writes: "Jesus cannot be

judged by the rule of our petty propriety. The admiration of His disciples overwhelmed Him and carried Him away."

I wish, therefore, to suggest certain other facts which render these objections highly improbable, and which also serve to give a still livelier sense of the real sinlessness of our Lord.

The first is that it was those who were nearest to Him who have testified to His spotless purity. It is quite easy to make a good impression on the public. It is not so easy to extort from those who live with us a similar tribute unless it be deserved. Many men seem great and good at a distance, but nearer at hand their faults are manifest. Now the fact was that in public Jesus was often charged with doing wrong. The Pharisees openly called Him a sinner, because they thought He broke the Sabbath, and a devil because He opposed them, and a blasphemer because He said God was His Father. He did not live such a life as to be called a saint by the established standard of the day. His reputation was not based on conformity to the common ideal. On the contrary, He was crucified as a malefactor. It was only those who lived with Him who testify to the spotless beauty of His character. They saw Him in private. They watched Him in His most critical

hours. They heard His ejaculations. They were His confidential friends. But it was they who from the very first acknowledged, and with greater emphasis as their acquaintance with Him ripened, that He was the Holy One of God. Their testimony seems of great worth. Popular applause is easy to win if we conform to the popular ideal, but this testimony was rendered in the face of derision and apparent failure, by those who knew Him best.

Furthermore, nothing that Jesus ever said or did appears even now to indicate sin in Him. We have grown very wise. Some think that, speaking comparatively, we have grown good. Certainly the world has greatly advanced in the knowledge of duty. But it is a fact that we cannot find anything to criticize in Jesus from a moral point of view. All that we can do, whether Christians or not, from theologians to novelists, is to show that our teachings were His. He can still say, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" In this age, for example, we lay great stress on the love of man as the highest form of morality; on benevolence, unselfishness, on altruism. But all this was taught and practised years ago by Jesus. Or, if we say that morality depends on the motives from which men act, what motives

can be higher than those which appear in the life of Jesus? The Sermon on the Mount is the moral code of the ages, and point, if you can, to any principle or precept of that sermon which Jesus did not obey in His life. I need not expand on this; but I beg you to remember that the growing moral sense of nineteen centuries has not convicted Him of any fault of character.

Still again, remember that He made this impression on His friends and gave this evidence in His life, although He was perfectly open to temptation and, in fact, fought it hand to hand. He was not a cold ideal. He was not a statue in marble. Life's battle was tremendously real to Him. He was tempted as we are. He grew also in knowledge and wisdom. Therefore the spotless holiness of His character becomes of treble worth. It appears a living attainment. It was a conquest. It was a thoroughly human quality, and on that account must have impressed the more those who were about Him. We need not stumble over the notion that a sinless person cannot be tempted. If our first parents were tempted and fell, Christ could be tempted without falling. Moreover, the power of temptation consists simply in its offering us something that we desire; and Jesus desired much that He could not have, if he

were to become man's Redeemer. It was His lot to lay aside the enjoyment of Heaven's favor; to fail apparently of winning men to God; at least to have the Father hide His face from Him. His temptations lay in the desire for those good things which were forbidden Him, and the very intensity of His love of God and man made the temptations stronger. At any rate the testimony is unanimous that He knew temptation's power. The battle in the wilderness of Judea, the agony in the garden of Gethsemane, the remark that fell from His lips, "I have overcome the world," sufficiently attest it. This very writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews knew it. He says, "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." "In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." The disciples knew Him too well to claim for Him exemption from the common lot. They saw Him harassed and oppressed, and therefore bowed the more reverently before the meekness and gentleness, the purity and love, the unselfishness and the righteousness, which in spite of temptation never failed to manifest themselves in Jesus. This adds immensely to our admiration of His character. He was one of ourselves. The holiness of God may be too far above us for

us to comprehend it, but the spotless purity of the tempted Saviour, who will not adore?

Now, once more, I add that the Lord Jesus had for His confessed rule of life a principle which naturally made Him realize keenly the presence of sin, even in its least apparent forms. He said, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me"; and through all His life the will of God was His law, and to do that will was His firm resolve. I ask you to note this particularly; for a man's sense of sin depends directly upon his idea of what sin is. Many people think that only crime is sin, and because they have done no crime they feel no sense of sin. Others think sin to be merely selfishness, and because they are kind and philanthropic, do not regard themselves as seriously at fault. But the Bible teaches that sin is far more than this. It is any want of conformity to the will of God. Man owes to God absolute loyalty of thought and act. The least rupture of that loyalty is sin. The broader and deeper our knowledge of the will of God, the more must we feel that we are sinful. Now my point is, that Jesus was fully aware of this. This was His rule; by this He judged. And He gives evidence of so broad and deep a knowledge of what God's will is that the rule of His life made Him sensible

of sin to a degree in comparison with which our best perceptions of it are as twilight to high noon.

Yet He had no sense of personal sin. Though He had the highest possible standard by which to judge, He never felt that the standard condemned Him. Though He was keenly alive to moral differences, though He stands before us the supreme Teacher of what is right, though He had for His rule of life the highest of all laws, He deliberately said, "I have overcome the world"; "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

Fellow-sinners, what a character is this! It defies all explanations save that of the text. A man, yet a sinless man! Tempted, but never stained! Fighting hand to hand with evil, but never wounded by it! In the world, and yet above it! Once and only once in human history has this spectacle appeared.

Permit me, then, in a word, to press upon your minds the practical importance of this truth.

The moral character of Jesus is a sufficient credential of the truth of His gospel. He has other credentials, but I bring forward this to-day. He is unique. He is truth and righteousness incarnate. Therefore His word must be authoritative; His teaching concerning God and duty, truth and salvation, must be our absolute standard. He guar-

antees by His personal sinlessness the authority of the message. What He declares to be God's truth we must accept as such. What He declares to be God's will and purpose we must obey and believe. We scarcely need other evidence. At His feet, mind and heart should bow.

Further, He is worthy to be man's representative before God. Sinless Himself, He is a rightful priest of humanity. So our text says, "Such an high priest became us." This is what we need. Who but He can venture for us into the most holy place? Who but He can sprinkle the atoning blood? He is a priest whose right to mediate, history and conscience, as well as God, declare.

For can we suppose that this sinless life was lived for Himself alone? He Himself assures us of the contrary. He came into the world,—He did not belong to it. He had no need to live on earth at all. His express declaration is that He came for our redemption. If so, we must certainly behold in His sinless life more even than the perfect example of what our lives should be. It was the necessary preparation for the sacrifice of the cross, and it becomes more than ever precious when we consider that it was part of the redemption price paid for our deliverance. For we are "not redeemed with corruptible things, as

silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The character which the world itself cannot but admire, and the life which stands forth as the great exception to all other lives, obtain the highest significance when we also remember that God "hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Well may we adore Him. Well may we imitate and obey Him. But above all else, well may we trust Him; for He has won the right to redeem us, and is able to save unto the uttermost all those that come unto God by Him.

II

THE CRISIS OF A SOUL

II

THE CRISIS OF A SOUL

"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."—LUKE xv. 10.

WHAT a contrast is this to the estimate of things which prevails on earth! Crowds of human beings, wild with enthusiasm, toss up their hats and make the air ring with their hurrahs; but it is for the victory of their national arms or the triumph of their political party. Church bells peal out their inspiring strains as if to waken man and nature to gladness and thankfulness; but it is only for a formal festival or to summon already devout souls to worship God. The faces that we gaze on in the streets do not often indicate much joy at all; but when they do, it is commonly only the joy of social pleasure or commercial success. The world is for the most part absorbed in admiring itself, or the one part is absorbed in envying the other. Or, if not so bad as that, its joy springs from the discovery it makes, the knowledge it gains, the canvas it paints, and the fortunes it gathers. It is not wholly so, I know. There are some who do

show the heavenly spirit and rejoice in the progress of reform, the uplifting of the lowly, and the salvation of the lost. But alas! these are a minority. The common judgments of earth are quite different and utterly forget the real values of the things which they applaud.

But the world of spirits which looks down on this judges by another standard. It smiles in pity at men's love of toys that will soon be broken. It sorrows to see noble powers prostituted to unworthy ends. The pleasures which most men find only awaken sadness in the angels' hearts. The world seems all awry, given over to delusion, insane with its self-love and self-applause. These angelic eyes are eager to see other spectacles, and whenever they behold a prodigal rising from his sins and setting his face toward home, or a proud man bending on his knees before the altar and confessing in sincerity the wickedness of his pride, or a sinner of any kind, convicted of his sinfulness, and crying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," then the song breaks forth from the heavenly hosts, and round the throne of God the angels of His presence chant a new triumph of their Father in the rescue of another human soul.

This contrast was part of the general reversal of opinion about the worth of things which Jesus

taught to be necessary. He said, "Many that are first shall be last and the last first." "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." These declarations turn the popular ideas upside down. They precisely reverse the common judgment. Even the best Christians do not fully share the mind of Christ upon such subjects, and the most of us are following Him a great way off. Especially is it pitiable to see the indifference to moral qualities and the practical unbelief in the danger in which every sinful soul stands. We must needs pity ourselves that we can be so indifferent. It may do us good, by helping us to judge ourselves more faithfully and to serve others more wisely, to inquire why there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. From what we are elsewhere taught, and from what we may naturally infer, it is possible to give an answer to the question, and it may let some of heaven's light in upon our darkness.

1. I suggest, therefore, that in the presence of the angels of God there is known the full value of a human soul. We do not realize the value of a soul, for several reasons. We think more, for ex-

ample, of institutions than of individuals. We see that certain great corporations (as I may call them) appear to be important for the progress of the race and the well-being of society. The Church is important for the culture of morals; the school for the discovery of character and the attainment of knowledge; the State for the protection of property and the order of society. We make these as of first value and give them our zealous support. What matters it that thousands perish on the field of battle, if the nation be preserved? It is of more moment, we are apt to think, to advance the cause in which we are interested than to stop in our career to give heed even to the particular persons by whom the cause is to be upheld. Men die, we say, but institutions live. The great ideas, which are embodied in them, must be perpetuated, and if they are, the greatest end has been accomplished.

It is natural for us thus to feel and argue. It is true that, relatively to the race, institutions are more important than individuals. It is true that the country is worth preserving even at the cost of a million lives. It is true that, so far as our efforts go, institutions rank above men. But we should be one-sided and one-half blind if we let this truth absorb us. For what is society but the aggregation of individuals? What are institutions

for but for the particular men and women whom they help? In upholding them we ought to remember that their worth is wholly based on the value of individual souls. They are not ends in themselves. They will perish with the men that use them. We make great mistakes when we forget the man, in the machine, or the soul in the society. Heaven does not make this blunder. It sees the worth of each, be he the most obscure. The angels know that in the ultimate analysis institutions exist for men, not men for institutions.

Then again, we are apt to think of external dress and circumstance rather than of the internal life which is the reality of a man; of the fruits and flowers rather than of the root which bears them; of the gaudy palace rather than of the man who lives therein. We are apt to think reputation worth more than character, forgetting that if the two differ, character will pierce through the husk of reputation and make its true form known. We are apt to think more of effects than of causes, forgetting that but for the causes the effect would never have been. We value show above substance, forgetting that without the latter the former will soon die.

It does not require an angel to see the mistake of all this. Behold the king of Babylon walking

among his palaces and saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?"—when lo! the splendid vision vanishes, and the distraught brain of the mighty king makes him seem but as a beast of the field. Or behold the man whom Jesus pictures, reclining on his costly couch and saying, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," while already the fatal disease is developing within and the solemn fiat comes, "Thy soul shall be required of thee." The worship of externals may well be called by Scripture, madness and folly. They change like the seasons. They vanish as day into night. They are only the dress of human life, the clothes we wear for a little while, the house in which for a few years the spirit lives. The spirit is the reality. The man is more than his raiment. The character outlasts the reputation, and the soul the body.

Heaven, I say, is not thus deceived. It sees as in panorama the shifting scenes of human history. It sees the houses of one generation crumbled and others built out of their stones; the applause of one age dying before the forgetfulness or derision of the next; the forms of human life melting into others like the scenes of a dissolving

picture, while from the ever-changing spectacle human spirits emerge into the light of the other world, bearing with them none of the drapery of earth, but stamped indelibly with qualities of mind and heart which are to belong to them forever.

We say that in the presence of the angels of God there is known the worth of a human soul; and with the illusions of earth corrected, two other facts must complete that knowledge. The one is the fact of immortality; the other is the capacity of every soul, as these must appear to them.

To us the immortality of the soul is a faith; to them it is a vision and a fact. They have not known death. They do not stand gaping as we do into the darkness of the grave. They realize the immortality of the soul as we cannot do. They see its destiny stretch out into endless ages. By reason of the little span of man's earthly existence we, on the other hand, fail to feel this authority, and because our faith in immortality is a faith and not a realization of it, it is hard to feel the lessons which it teaches. It is difficult to believe in the supreme worth of that which perishes from our sight after so short a term of being. Materialism cannot believe in

the value of single lives. But heaven knows the truth. Angelic spirits know that spirits do not perish. They see that while the physical universe passes away, the souls which God has made He has made to live forever. They see that the future gives no promise of an end to any person. It is not an immortality of man that they see, but of men, each preserving his own for everlasting ages. It is not the immortality of spirit that they see, but of spirits. Personality is immortal; and as they gaze on this crowded world they realize that every human being will continue to exist when the entire framework of nature shall have changed its form, and when myriads of millenniums shall have passed by.

But more, they realize the capacity as well as the immortality of the soul. Immortality without capacity would amount to nothing. It would be the immortality of an animal. It is the capacity of the soul which makes its immortality so full of significance. The spirits of the better world realize the capacity of the soul from what they themselves possess. A man who has a trained intellect, who has thought much and suffered some, who has known the world by observation and experience, looks at a little

child with half sorrowful, half envious thought, as he reflects on the child's capacity for what it yet knows nothing of. He wonders to what use these latent powers will be put. He wonders what bitter sorrows the young, blooming mind will feel; what marvelous thoughts will rise in that fertile brain; for his own experience of life has taught him of what the mind of man is capable.

How much more must they know who enjoy powers that we have not, but which we shall surely have; and to whom the now dormant or budding capacity of the human soul is seen to contain infinite promises and pledges! They know the soul's capacity for happiness through the attainment of a perfectly moral life and of the rapture which thrills themselves. They know its capacity for knowledge, of which the glimmerings of earthly scene and thought give trivial foregleams. They know, too, its capacity for suffering, and that the bitter trials of earth are a solemn warning to it of what, through greater losses and more bitter effects, it may endure. They know, in short, its capacity for growth that gives it supreme importance. They know that it can rise to God and join with themselves in His happy and glorious service.

Therefore I say they know the value of a soul. What we imagine, they see. What we try to believe in, they behold as fact. On the soul of man these heavenly watchers and messengers fix their eye,—not on his rank or his wealth, not on his body or his circumstances, but on his soul, his personal inner life, his consciousness, for in that is the germ of his everlasting destiny.

2. This being so, I suggest further that in the presence of the angels of God there is known the curse which sin brings to any soul under its power. To feel the curse of sin we, unfortunately, have to see it in its most revolting forms. We have to look at the drunkard in the gutter or at the home made desolate by the crimes of one member of the household. Even then we are inclined to half extenuate it. Perhaps we consider it simply disease. But the higher we ourselves rise in moral life the more clearly do we see its baleful powers, its deep roots, its clinging fetters, its essential character; until at last we are convinced that the Bible was not wrong in describing under this name something which is real and universal among men, and which constitutes the fatal source of all man's woes. But in what a light must sin, in even its mildest form, appear in the presence of the angels of God!

They know, for example, the mind of God Himself upon the subject and the principle of His government. Matters which to us are questions of revelation are as plain as day to them. They are like statesmen who know the will of the sovereign and have made a study of government. They see the whole extent of the problem which sin presents to the moral government of God. They realize that if He were not to punish it, His empire would fall to pieces. They know the extent of that empire, the necessity of upholding truth and righteousness throughout all the worlds which constitute it, and that the moral Governor of the universe cannot permit rebellion to go unpunished in any of His creatures. We think it does not make much difference, that God can easily overlook such matters, that no great consequence will follow if we do transgress. So we often do in offences against human government, and perhaps thoughtlessly appeal to the pardoning power to release a criminal. But the magistrate and his advisers know that if law be not enforced it will fall into contempt, and that the integrity of the State rests upon its sanctity.

So a child will fancy that disobedience to parental law is a matter of small consequence. It may relate to but a trifling affair and the father's

punishment may appear unduly harsh. But the parent knows that the principle of obedience must be upheld, both for the sake of the offender and for that of the family. If it be despised, the child will go from bad to worse, character will be ruined, and the home wrecked. So, I say, heaven knows the necessity of God's punishing sin. It may weep over the offenders; it may long to save them; but it sees clearly that God's government and God's nature require that sin, in any form, should meet its penalty.

Moreover, the joy which the angels have in their holy life must make them realize the horrible effects of sin. What loathing a pure mind feels for rank and black impurity! Let any man of noble character come into close contact with a degraded, polluted, sin-defiled wretch, and though he may long to save him, he cannot help turning in abhorrence from the spectacle itself. Or, when a man has risen from the mire of shameful deeds and by dint of diligent self mastery and fellowship with Christ has attained a better life, with what disgust will he look back upon the slough in which he once wallowed! As we rise in character we see the baseness of that which is below us. As the tastes become refined we shudder that any debasing appetite is possible. Out of the joy of a

pure, sweet and holy, and intelligent mind, we see the wretchedness of ignorance and crime. So must the angels of heaven feel. By the joy which they have in holiness, must they perceive the vileness of wrong, the depravity of sin, the misery and sorrow which are the dregs of the sinner's cup.

Hence, I say, they know the curse of sin. Knowing the value of a soul, they know the awfulness of its position, if it be a sinful soul. Take any poor, degraded, battered specimen of humanity that you see arrested on the street and hurried to the police station; and what will be your feeling if in it you recognize a member of a well-known, cultured family, who began life with bright hopes and fine abilities, and whose downward course has been the breaking of noble hearts? Your thoughts will help you to understand the thoughts with which pure spirits of the better world look down on earth. They know the love of God, for they enjoy it themselves and understand what grief the sinner causes to his Father. They know the principles of God's government, and understand that even though He love He must punish the rebellious. They see the deepening degradation of sin, the sinking of the soul into blacker depths. They see eternity waiting to carry out the sentence and to intensify the stain,

immortality itself threatening to become a curse, and the very capacity of the soul only promising keener misery and unrelieved disgrace. Oh, could we see ourselves as Jesus says the heavenly spirits see us, how abashed we should be at the spectacle, and what a different estimate we too would take of the real reasons for rejoicing which may be found in this imperiled and distraught world!

3. But by the considerations which I have suggested, we may now enter fully into the Saviour's meaning when he said, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." For repentance is the crisis of a soul. See what it implies.

It means that a man has wakened up to a sense of his moral danger. A glimmering of the light in which the angels live has reached his mind. He has roused himself from the lethargy and indifference in which he has formerly lived. His eyes have been opened. He sees the immorality of sin, the godlessness of it, and by his undestroyed faith in an almighty God he knows himself to be in danger. He has been like a man sound asleep in a burning house, dreaming peacefully of his wealth and his luxurious home, with pleasant visions flitting before his mind, the shadows of the still higher realities which he had

thought himself to possess, and then is wakened roughly and suddenly to discover that his house is on fire, and his life in danger. Discoveries like this come to a man with the authority of a revelation. He can hardly tell how or why they come, but come they do, and with their coming all life changes its appearance. The mind wakes up. Old truth takes new power. Formal faiths become intense convictions. Such a discovery is implied in a man's repentance, and if the moral peril of a sinner be real, as Jesus says it is, the first step to safety consists in seeing it.

Then repentance means that a man, being awakened to his danger, has had a debate within his soul concerning sin and righteousness. He may see his danger and yet not fly from it. Some men take fearful risks. They deliberately do wrong in the face of undeniable consequences. He who repents has done more. He has seriously debated within himself what he should do in view of his discovered danger, and in that debate his soul has stood at the crisis of his existence. I think that to watch a man at such a crisis is more intensely interesting than any scene in any chapter of human history can be. Behold him! It is an immortal mind grappling with the question of its moral duty, and, by consequence, of

its moral character! But though immortal it is not wholly free. It has long been used to sin. It is fettered by evil habits. Its sight of divine realities is dim. But it is deciding the supreme question of its being. Before it the two parties appear which contest the loyalty of every man. Conscience utters its imperious voice. Desire speaks in soft, luxurious tones. God calls; sin pleads. Reason is divided. The will hesitates. Arguments rise from the depths of the pit clothed in fair words and specious doubts. Counter-arguments descend from heaven to meet them, and on the debate hangs the question of the godliness or the continued sinfulness of the soul. Does this not seem to you a thrilling moment, when a soul has resting upon it the responsibility of its future and hangs in the balance of its judgment? The mere fact that such an experience is possible proves the soul to be greater than all of nature and in its essence akin to God, and the debate is more momentous than any other, though it be held in the forum of the most obscure life.

But repentance means still more. It means that the soul has felt not only its danger but also the wickedness of its sin. There is a great difference between the two. No man repents who

merely flies from danger. Repentance means sorrow for having acted as we have; condemnation of our past principles; regret based not on expediency or fear, but on conscience. But when a man thus condemns sin in himself, he shows a better nature already appearing. The divine Spirit is also working in him. His better self, his immortal conscience, is asserting itself. In his self-condemnation he is coming to himself. The experience is mortifying. It may be attended with upbraidings for the past and fears for the future. But it is the demonstration of life. It proves him to be not yet lost. In the sorrow for sin because it is sin we see the soul already becoming renewed and testifying to its divine sonship.

Now, finally, repentance means that having been thus awakened to the danger and the wickedness of sin and having debated the question between God and his enemy, the soul has turned from sin, has condemned itself and its former master, has believed that God for Christ's sake will forgive and receive him, and has humbly turned to Him, again resolved to sin no more. This is the climax of the crisis. Belief must come, belief in God's forgiveness, belief in God's willingness to help it to a better life, belief in

Christ as God's anointed Saviour for the sinner. The immortal soul turns again toward home. The prodigal rises and says, "I will go to my Father." The leper falls at His feet, exclaiming, "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."

There is joy for angels and men in such a sight. It means that the lost child wants to feel his Father's kiss, that the immortal spirit of man is returning from its wanderings, and that another soul is saved. Oh, what are the victories of martial valor compared with such a victory as this! What are the works of genius compared with this work of grace! What emancipation can be compared with this emancipation of an immortal soul! The Father cries, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; . . . for this my son . . . was lost, and is found." No wonder Jesus says, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one (aye, over even one) sinner that repenteth," for the crisis of an immortal soul has been turned, and the decision is for God.

There is scarcely need of any application of this subject, yet I would have you who are Christians learn from it to seek with new zeal and interest the salvation of your fellow-men. Warn them of their peril. Press the debate upon them. Point to them the sinfulness of sin. Do not

play the rôle of the prodigal's elder brother, but realize as angels do the value of a soul, the glory of a sinner's repentance.

I would make a direct appeal to every one who is unreconciled to God. You must repent. You must face the question whether you will belong to God or to sin. You are a sinner in God's sight. You need a new heart, new principles to live by, new hopes of the hereafter. There are blessed spirits waiting your decision. Christ Himself waits for it. On you I cast the responsibility of making it. If you have any faith in immortality, any sense of what your souls are capable, any conception of the curse and ruin which sin is working in you; if you have any ear to hear the words of the Son of God, "I came to call sinners to repentance," I pray you, while you may, to heed His summons and ask forgiveness from your God. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

III

CONFESSING CHRIST

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"Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God." —LUKE xii. 8.

WE find this expression, or one like it, falling several times from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth, and more particularly as the opposition to Him increased and the critical period of His life drew near. He evidently felt it necessary to draw out by means of public confession the vague, latent faith of such of His followers as might be true disciples. For He was forming the nucleus of His future Church. He did not expect to erect His kingdom while He was in the flesh. He knew that the little company of believers would be the agents by whom He would work His triumph. Hence to commit them fully to His cause was an object of prime importance. It was not enough to go to Him by night, with a half-doubting faith, and say, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God." Nicodemus must face the Sanhedrin itself and confess his

faith. It was not enough to follow with the crowd that thronged His journeys through Galilee. It was not enough to question with one's self, "Who is He?" and "Is not this the Christ?" or to seek from His beneficent touch healing for the body. All this interest and enthusiasm would melt before the first heat of persecution like wax before the sun. It would not stand the strain of His absence. It was too selfish, too ignorant, too worldly. There must be gathered a band of public confessors to be taught and consecrated if the cause of Jesus was to advance to the salvation of the world.

Yet we can appreciate the difficulty of such a public avowal at that time. The Saviour was so different from what tradition and custom had expected in the Christ. The opposition of the chief priests and Pharisees, to whom the nation had been wont to look for religious guidance, was pronounced against Him. His own life, too, seemed shrouded in mystery and leading into darkness. He did not explain all His ideas. To follow Him was like entering on an unknown way. He Himself plainly intimated that it would lead through peril and perhaps to death. There was truly need that He should set over against this requirement of public con-

fession the glowing promise recorded in our text. The Saviour felt this, and hence connected salvation itself with open confession of His name.

He did not, of course, mean thereby the mere confession of the lips. He did not ask for the huzzahs of the multitude, such as were heard later on when He crossed Olivet in triumph. The confession of Judas was as little a real confession as the denial of Peter was a real denial. He meant such a confession as the leper's, when he knelt at His feet, saying, "Lord if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean"; such as the woman's, who, in Simon's house, anointed Him with her precious ointment; such as that of Bartimæus, the man that was born blind; such as Peter's—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"—to which Jesus answered, "Upon this rock I will build My Church." Such a confession made under such circumstances was the very voice of God Himself in the human heart witnessing to His Son,—and of such it was that Jesus said, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God."

We are presented, therefore, with the duty and privilege of confessing Christ before men.

Change of circumstances has not made the duty less urgent nor taken away the promise. Indeed we can hardly say that the circumstances have changed. The world is no less now than then hostile in spirit to the Son of man. The traditions and customs of daily life, and many of the world's most famous men, are as pronounced in opposition to Him as were the Pharisees of old. To follow Jesus still seems often like entering on an unknown and perilous way. Therefore the need of open, positive, avowed, committed, consecrated faith is as great as ever, and we have no hesitation in saying that the words of our text are as truly directed to the men of this day and place as to the half-interested, half-doubting multitude to which they were first spoken.

1. I would like you to observe with me the object we are required to confess: "Whosoever shall confess *Me*." So we read wherever the phrase occurs; and it is a fair example of the demands which Jesus always made on His disciples. I need not remind you that the burden of Christ's teaching was about Himself; not, indeed, to explain to His hearers the mystery of His own being, or to show them how He could be both Son of God and Son of man,—that doubtless is a problem which we could not understand even if He

explained it to us,—but so to work miracles and lay down doctrines, live in obedience to God, and, withal, to drop such expressions about Himself and His origin and His destiny, that His hearers would feel that the thing which He wanted them to do was simply to believe on Him as the Saviour and obey and serve Him. It is most remarkable how Jesus maintained, throughout, this position. Other men publish systems of truth and ask that we shall follow their demonstrations and accept their conclusions. Others still declare themselves advocates and representatives of a cause, and ask that we should join with them on the ground of its inherent justice. But Jesus put Himself forward as the object of men's faith. He said, "I am the truth." He said, "I am the way and the life." By so doing He proclaimed Himself more than a teacher sent from God, more than a Moses or a Joshua sent to lead mankind into the promised land. He said in effect, "I am the promised land. I am the truth itself." The proud French king, trampling under his heel the liberties of his country, exclaimed, "I am the state." Here, without the pride, but with greater dignity, not in the spirit of egotism, but because in this universe all things that are good and true are embodied

in God, and because man's highest duty is to obey God, Jesus, who was God manifest in the flesh, said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God."

But while we can easily recognize this fact in the earthly life of Christ, it is continually forgotten so far as the present duties of this world are concerned, and I would like to impress on you again the simple object of true Christian confession. You will see what is meant by reflecting that we are not asked to confess a human creed or a theology. It is indeed inevitable that every thinking believer will have more or less of a theology and some kind of a creed. I suppose the opposite would be to presume mental stagnation. It would imply that faith is the destruction of thought, whereas, on the contrary, faith is a new starting point for thought. It raises new questions and it puts us in the right attitude to answer at least some of them. I do not see how an intelligent believer can help having some kind of a theology. His

confidence in Christ will compel him to take certain views of God and of his own soul, which will develop as he thinks and grows, and which will also tend to a more or less definite creed. Hence we should find no fault with the Church for having a theology and for producing creeds. These are but the result of her study of the divine word, the product of the attacks to which she has been exposed and the periods of growth through which she has passed. We believe, moreover, that the Spirit of Christ is with His people, still guiding them into all truth; and that with the progress of time clearer views of God's revelation have been and may be expected to be enjoyed.

Yet salvation does not hinge upon this fact. Not all can carry out consequences logically. Not all will draw the same inferences. So the divine Master leads us back to the fountain head and bids us drink of its pure waters. Our faith is fundamentally and only faith in Him,—and our confession is the confession of Him. We simply say with Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." We say with John, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." If we do this sincerely, we have in us the substance of Christianity. If we confess this we draw the line distinctly between belief and unbelief.

We ought to introduce here a recognition of the fact that we must have definite views about Christ. We cannot believe Him a mere man—only such views as are consistent with loving Him, not only, but trusting to His present power and authority. We accept righteousness as our law, God as our Father, God's power as our hope, God's revelation as our light. We ought not, indeed, to do this with the idea that nothing else is to be believed, unless indeed we are willing not only to enter the kingdom as children but also to remain "babes in Christ" forever. We are to strive after deeper and wider Christian knowledge. But with that fine perception of the needs of human life which Jesus always showed He presented Himself alone the germ, the foundation, the fountain head of Christianity, and claimed from mankind loyal confession of faith in Him.

So, on the other hand, we are not asked to profess personal goodness. Here again we should make a similar caution to that which pertains to the matter of belief. For acceptance of Christ is the germ of holiness. It is the turning point of a man's character, from which he ever journeys nearer to his God. The Lord did not by any means intend to hinge salvation on mere belief apart from its effect on the heart. Your faith

is a moral as well as an intellectual act. It is the foundation of love to God, of likeness to God, of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. So it is described by the apostles as faith which purifies the heart and overcomes the world. Let a man accept and follow Christ and he must be led to God. We utterly repudiate the idea that men will be saved whether they are bad or good, if only they believe, or that it is possible for a conscious hypocrite to find his way through the pearly gates. But from this it does not follow that in confessing Christ we confess our own goodness. Quite the contrary. We confess our sinfulness, which needs the atoning blood of the Son of God. We confess our helplessness, which needs the power of Jesus to make us like Himself. We confess that we are poor and miserable and blind, that we are sinners by nature and by act, but, resting on His promise, we believe that Christ is able and willing to save all those that come unto God by Him.

Thus, you see, the confession demanded is neither the assertion of great knowledge nor of great goodness. It neither claims to understand mysteries nor to have reached the goal of character. It has nothing of the spirit of the Pharisee in it. It does not say, "God, I thank Thee, that I

am not as other men are." It is the humblest thing in the world, all the humbler as it is more sincere. It is the cry of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But it fastens itself upon Christ as the Rock of safety, the God-built fortress for imperiled souls, the sacrifice for sin, and then proclaims, "He is my confidence and my hope."

Let me pause here to emphasize this truth. The Church labors under the continual imputation of the world, that it professes to know more than it does and to be better than it is. Men are held off from its communion by their unwillingness to make any profession of character or by the sense of their own ignorance. We are told that the inconsistencies of Christians shame their profession. In one sense they do, but in another they do not. If it be meant that the Christian claims to be above inconsistencies, then certainly the objection is false and vain. I have no wish to excuse the faults of believers. We all are ready to exclaim, "We have strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep." But when we see men smothering their faith, and holding in check their better impulses, letting themselves be counted with the world when they ought to be counted with the Church, then, indeed, we feel like reminding them

that they also are required, as the condition of Christ's salvation of them, to confess Him before men. You are asked for no confession of theology, important as a creed may be, and I like to think that our Church, while she is supposed to lay much stress on her doctrine, opens in a truly Christlike way her portals to the world, asking not even adherence to her own particular doctrines, but simply asking genuine faith in Jesus Christ. You are asked for no profession of goodness, important as it is to be good, but you are asked to confess Christ as your Lord and Saviour. That is enough to begin with. It puts you on God's side. It puts you on the side of holiness. If it be genuine, it means an utter change of the natural bent of your wills. It means a religious life, based on trust in Jesus as your only and all-sufficient Saviour.

Here are two candidates. Your suffrage can show your political views. Here are two theories of life. Your adherence to the one or the other shows the moral state of your soul. It is the old choice between Jehovah and Baal; between God and evil; between Christ and the world. With marvelous simplicity, and yet with a skill which always anticipated the final judgment, Jesus put Himself forth as the object of our confession,

knowing well that if a man honestly confesses Him, that man is already on the way to all truth and to all holiness.

2. So much for the object of this confession; let me call your attention next to the manner of it. This is given us in the words "before men." In other words, it is to be in public. This is absolutely essential to it. Otherwise it would be no confession at all. This is the difference between faith and confession. The latter is the expression of the former. The very point before us is that we are not to hide the truth away in our hearts nor whisper it under our breath in prayer, are not to cherish one principle in our souls and publish another with our lips. "No man," said Jesus, "when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light." He seems to imply by this form of expression that in religious matters men are guilty of just such folly. Not a few lights are burned in secret. "Let your light so shine before men," said Jesus, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

But let us ask more particularly, What is the need of this? Why may we not be like Nico-

demus, a disciple in the dark? Surely it is possible to cherish religious faith without parading it before one's fellow-men. Is it not a matter solely between the individual soul and God? I think we appreciate the reasons which deter not a few from obeying this direct command of Christ's. It is felt by some that they have much as yet to think and learn about in connection with religion. There are important questions which they have not solved. There are practical problems, too, about which they do not yet feel sure. They ask more time before such a vital step shall be taken. Others, doubtless, are waiting until they are better. I doubt not that in many cases there is the knowledge of some particular habit or secret fault which they are not willing to abandon, and which is the real cause of their delay, though others may be alleged. They would wait till the more sober period of middle life has come, when character will have been settled and when there will be little danger of later regret. I speak of those who in their hearts cherish the belief that they are Christians, and to whom some phase of doctrine, some practical habit, seems too great a barrier for them to cross. It is with them that I plead to-day the duty of confession.

We plead it, first, for their own sakes. We are

ready to admit, indeed, that a man may be a Christian though out of the Church. God forbid that we should limit the flow of His grace to any certain channels or that we should ignore the evidence of godly lives wherever it may be shown. But we believe nevertheless that a belief which is held in secret is not likely to benefit the believer as it would do if it were expressed. An idea which you cannot put into words is certainly a very vague and useless one to you. An opinion which you conceal from others is not likely to have its due influence upon you. Especially is this true as to moral and religious ideas, which from their very nature demand the right to govern your conduct and control your life. If you keep them hermetically sealed in the closet of your heart they will not control you. They will not make the man of you that they might make. You cannot expect to enjoy the power and the beauty of the gospel unless you are outspoken in your acceptance of it, and so commit yourself altogether to its keeping.

Then, having staked your all upon it, you will value it at its true worth. Let a man invest a few dollars quietly in some rather promising enterprise which is at the same time quite independent of his proper business, and while he

may be interested in it to the extent of his investment, he will not care much whether it succeed or fail. But let him invest his whole fortune and his name in the enterprise, and then he will live for it. He will develop all its resources. He will work its whole worth. Let a man, in like manner, be openly and publicly on Christ's side, and he will discover in Christ power and beauty, truth and joy, which he never would have suspected if he had merely cherished in his secret thoughts a vague belief. You cannot expect to reap a great harvest from a little plot of ground.

But we plead the duty of publicly confessing Christ also for the sake of others. You will remember how the Lord said, "He that is not with Me is against Me: and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth." I know that He also said, "He that is not against us is for us," and we recognize the latter truth in the fact that in many ways Christianity is sustained even by forces which do not belong to her,—by the needs of society, by the common respect and sympathy of a large portion of mankind. But the former truth is equally valid and, as Christ intimates, relates chiefly to the personal relation which men sustain to Him. Society will often be for religion, but against Christ, for a system and a code and

a cultus, but against a personal religious life. This latter is the point before us now, and we see it illustrated by every glance we take over the community without. For every man, like Peter after Pentecost, casts his shadow on the society about him. He exerts influence in proportion to his wealth or reputation. We all live "before men," and we feel it more often than we feel ourselves to live before God. The world is near and tangible. It receives impressions as well as gives them. It counts with quick mathematical accuracy the adherents of each cause. And why is it, though society is called Christian, that the current of society is so often away from godliness, if not because there are so many who refuse positively to confess and obey their faith?

We say then to those who withhold their allegiance that they are swelling the numbers of the opposing host. Each counts one on the other side. Their children usually draw the inference quickly enough. They are often without the faith as well as the confession. The omission of such a duty is stronger than the hidden faith can be. Actions speak louder than words. No man who refuses to let it be known that he is on Christ's side but must sadly reflect that a world which much needs every help it can

toward God is finding in him, so far as his influence goes, and all the more if he be a correct and honorable man, an excuse for its worse neglect and real unbelief of the only Saviour.

Then we plead for confession for Christ's sake. I do not see how there can be in a man very much gratitude for what Jesus has done for him if he be not willing to own and serve his Lord. Certainly Christ does not care for mere honor; and yet we are the worse if we do not render it. One would think that a man would be ashamed of himself to cherish in his heart faith in Jesus and then to reflect that he had not done his part in witness-bearing. The apostles themselves must have felt humiliated when they saw Jesus crucified and remembered their own desertion of Him. It is scarcely possible that the Spirit of Christ has touched at all deeply the soul that is not willing, yea, that is not glad, to declare to the world its faith in Him.

"Yet," some one will say, "it is possible to do all this without making what is commonly called a profession of religion." Now we admit that the first and all-important way of publicly confessing Christ is by the daily life. Let it not be supposed that in our zeal for the ordinances of religion we forget the greater ordinances of daily life. In fact,

the duty laid down by Jesus must be thus performed or not at all. The real public confession is that which we make before our townsfolk and acquaintances. Our text means confessing Christ in your business. Business ought to be conducted in a religious way, as well as religion in a business way. Many a man knows the temptation not to confess Christ when by dishonesty, or sharpness, or the like, he could make money. Would that every Christian business record were what it ought to be! I fear men do not realize the moral influence of their commercial standing. They might thus bear a testimony to Christ which would actually save immortal souls.

So, too, our text means confessing Christ in your recreations and in your homes. A true confessor will take more pleasure in his confession than in any amusement that the world loves. Religion is not opposed to enjoyment. It is not a thing of tears and sobs or of ascetic life. But they who indulge in all the world's gayety, and who at the same time do little or nothing for the world's salvation, surely do not hold out a very bright light, by seeing which men may glorify their Father in the heavens. Christ proclaims work as greater than pleasure, the mind and the soul as greater than the body, spiritual things as worth

more than the joys which now are and to-morrow have faded, and His confessors must testify by their lives to these truths. They must not count themselves nor let themselves be counted with the world's people. Hence we say that the daily life is the best public confession of Christ. But if so, then why not add to it confession of Him in and with the Church? Obviously no man who does thus confess Him in the daily life would hesitate, except in a few very peculiar cases, to confess Him among His people, and every case of such hesitation only shows that the excuse by which such hesitation is condoned is a mere excuse. The fact is, however, that a formal avowal of faith in Jesus is necessary in order to complete the testimony of your life. Without that of the life, formal confession would be indeed vain; but without it, the life is apt to fall below the mark. It will seal your life. It will commit you beyond retraction to the service of God, and this is what you need.

As things now are, your service is worth little. Then it will be worth double what it now is. It will open to you the real joy and power of Christian life, and you will feel that you are in closer sympathy with Him who in the presence of Pilate and the Jews witnessed His good confession. Oh, let us have done with the mistake of thinking that

we can serve Christ just as well in secret as in public! We can serve Him perhaps, but not just as well. In the majority of cases we will be guilty of hiding our talent in a napkin and of putting our light under a bushel. The battle between Christ and His foes is too public, the issues are too sharp for secret allegiance. The world's needs are too great, aye, your own peril is too great. Let the world know your faith, and by declaring it, prove that it is more than a mere human opinion, prove it to be rather the Spirit of Jesus witnessing through you to the name and truth of God.

3. Let us now turn to notice the reward. "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God." You will notice the perfect parallel between the duty and the reward. On the one hand, as our confession of Christ is personal, so will be His confession of us. There is no man who honors Christ that Christ will not honor. This is but part of the general truth, that we are to stand before God as individuals. The Bible tells of a personal judgment. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." It speaks likewise of a personal protection exercised by God over His people. "I am poor and needy;

yet the Lord thinketh upon me." The Almighty does not govern us merely by general laws. He has in mind the personal welfare of each child, and in and through the laws His hand touches and guides them. It is the peerless beauty of our religion that it constitutes such a personal relation, so that in every moment of our lives we may say, as Jesus said before His death, "Father, I come to Thee."

So after this manner will the confessor be confessed. Christ said, "I know My sheep, and am known of Mine." The apostle says, "Every man shall have his praise, his own peculiar and appropriate praise of God." Not in a mass, not as a church, but as individuals, will Jesus, our Advocate, acknowledge His own. I think this gives added force to the duty of confessing Him. We should long then to have His mark upon us, and we ought to be willing to wear that mark now. We should be glad then to be distinct from the sinful world; we ought to be glad to be distinct now. By all the hope we have then of the personal acknowledgment of Jesus, we ought to rejoice now to acknowledge Him by life and word.

Then, on the other hand, as our confession of Christ is public, so will be His confession of us.

I like to think of some obscure child of God, whose testimony to his Lord the world despised, crowned before angels and men with the approbation of the Son of God. The day is coming in which the wretched judgments that are dictated by pride and wealth shall be reversed, and when the honor shall be given to those who have been faithful to the Crucified. We expect not with pride, for it will be no testimony to our righteousness, but it will set honor now on Him whom now we serve. It will be the vindication of truth and right. It will be the glory of Christ in the glory of His Church, and the living creatures and the elders above the throne will say "Amen" when Christ pronounces His confession in testimony of its justice and truth.

There is contained in all this a terrible warning which our Lord goes on to state in the verse which follows. Only those whom Christ confesses will enter the everlasting mansions, while whosoever denieth Him before men, him shall the Son of man deny before the angels of God. Thus, confession is salvation, not, let me repeat, the mere confession of the lips or the creed,—for "not every one," said Jesus, "that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father

which is in heaven,"—but the confession of the life and lips, for, "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Open, avowed, public confession is what Jesus asks. He cannot look with favor on the faith that refuses to acknowledge Him, any more than on the confession which is insincere. He cannot be pleased to see men paltering with the truths of His word, associating with the hosts of His redeemed, but not joining in their toils and prayers, hiding what faith and love and hope they have in the darkness of their own souls. With all the added emphasis which comes from a sense of the world's need and of your own need, I speak this message to you to-day. Do not remain, I implore you, in perpetual doubt. Do not remain palsied and half blind. Do not imagine religion to be a sentiment that you can grow in your hothouse, but not expose to the common air. If what you call your religion will not stand such exposure, in truth's name let it die. For your own sakes, for the world's sake, for Christ's sake, if you have faith, dare to say so. I would stand to-day, like Moses in the camp of Israel, and cry, "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him gird on his armor and take his sword and come forth

to the battle." Let him show his colors—for the words of our text ring like a clamor to action: "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God."

IV

SAMSON'S RIDDLE

IV

SAMSON'S RIDDLE

"And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."—JUDGES xiv. 14.

IT is really quite difficult for us to rouse much admiration for Samson. Looked at from the distance at which we live from him, and from the height of culture to which we have attained, he appears like a mere Jewish Hercules, a gigantic development of muscle without any corresponding powers of mind or character. We do not read of his having done anything which impresses us as either wise or noble. He appears in our eyes a mere manslayer, a rude, coarse, sensual brute, though somewhat witty and courageous, playing his bloody pranks upon the Philistines with the jollity of a sportsman; joking with them while plotting their destruction; and combining with his mighty physical strength the most depraved animal passions. The only quality about him that we would call a virtue was his total abstinence, and yet he is continually reminding us that even total abstinence does not make a man a saint.

It is not strange that many a modern reader of the Bible should stumble over the story of Samson and ask how it is possible to believe that such a man was really raised up by God to do such work and live such a life. There is, however, a very simple principle which helps us to meet this difficulty, a principle in accordance with which the whole Bible is constructed. That is, that if God would make a revelation, He must do it in language or other symbols of thought which those to whom the revelation is given can understand. If you wish to explain anything to a child, you do not read him the definition given of it in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, but you use short and familiar words, and you point him to some specific example, which has come within the limited range of his experience, from which he can grasp your idea. Even so, you do not suppose for a moment that the child has fully grasped your thought. All you hope to do is to give him some idea of what you mean which will serve his purpose until his mind has grown and he is able to take in the whole truth. In accordance with this recognized principle has God proceeded in the communication of His thought and will to men.

Any other principle would have made a revelation impossible, for it could never have been

apprehended. If in the childhood of the world He had revealed the finished truths which we may learn from the Bible as a whole, He would have acted as uselessly as a teacher would do who would start little children to learn Euclid before they have mastered the multiplication table, or to read Mill's Logic before they have studied the alphabet. The whole Bible illustrates the way in which little by little the mind of the Hebrews was led forward toward the ideal of truth and character which Jesus finally disclosed. But on the way you must ever expect to find merely movement toward the ideal, not its attainment; and you must estimate each particular phase of the history in the light of the specific circumstances in which it appears and the particular purpose it was meant to serve.

If, then, we apply this principle to the story of Samson, we are to remember the condition of Israel when he lived. They were a half-civilized nation of mountaineers, a collection of tribes without any central government, scattered along the hills of Palestine. There was but little serious observance of the Mosaic laws and ritual, while at the same time Jehovah was held to be their national Deity and invisible King, and the ark and the priesthood at Shiloh were reminders of the

God whom their fathers had served centuries before. The times of the Judges in Israel were times of lawlessness and confusion so great that only the establishment of David's monarchy saved the state from destruction and the religion of Moses from oblivion. In particular, the moral life of the Hebrews had sadly deterioriated. Multitudes had gone after the gods of the Philistines and those impure Phœnician deities whose worship was an infamy, whose service was open sin. The whole nation was corrupted by these associations and, as might be expected, fell a prey to their heathen neighbors. For forty years the Hebrews were subject to the Philistines. The spectacle presented is that of utter weakness,—weakness as a nation, weakness as a religion, weakness as a people, and as individuals. All seemed to be going to destruction, and the reason was that Israel had forsaken God and did not observe His law.

Now, to make them realize just this one truth, that in God was their strength, does Samson appear to have been raised up. He was consecrated to Jehovah from his birth, and his abstinence from wine and his uncut hair were the signs of his consecration. God endowed him with supernatural strength so long as he kept his Nazarite vow. In his personal character he shared all the vices and

follies of his race and age. He was morally weak, just as they were weak. He delighted in adventure as a true mountaineer. He frolicked with danger like a genuine barbarian. But he was gigantically strong in body so long as he kept his vow. The country rang with the fame of his exploits. The Philistine oppressors trembled at his coming. What did he make them realize? Simply this, that God could give strength to those who kept His law. The truth was presented in a way which the rude marauders of both Judæa and Philistia would feel. Had he been a man of lofty spiritual character the lesson would not have been as impressive. Jehovah can give supernatural strength to those who observe His vows. The inference was, Let Israel obey Him, and she too will become strong again. In proportion as her obedience grows will her strength and power grow. If by obedience to the mere vow of the Nazarite Samson was invincible, how invincible, as a nation and as a church, might Israel become if obedient to the whole moral law which God had given her. By the happy though unnatural strength of this Nazarite were the Hebrews taught to stand in reverence before Jehovah, and to seek for help again in Him by disobeying whom all their disasters had been brought about.

For the same reason, no doubt, has the story of Samson been preserved to us. We are not called upon to admire his character. He is no hero for us to imitate. He simply crystallizes, in his titanic figure, the idea of strength through obedience to God, and it is for us to apply this truth with that broader knowledge of what obedience consists in, and the finer ideal of what divine strength really is, which has been taught by one of which Samson, in his rude, fierce way, was to his own age an impressive type.

Now with this understanding of the significance of the man, I wish to call your attention to the somewhat singular account of the riddle which he proposed to his Philistine companions. It will be found, I think, to have a deeper meaning than even they guessed or Samson intended, or than lies upon the surface of the narrative. The young giant was on his way to Timnath, a Philistine city, in company with his parents, going thither to see the woman whom he desired to make his wife. In the region between Dan and the seacoast wild beasts were plentiful, and it chanced that a young lion sprang from his lair on the travelers. But as if it had been a kid, Samson seized the beast and without a weapon in his hand rent it into pieces. He said nothing of the adventure even to his parents; but

on the way back he sought the carcass of the lion and found that a swarm of bees had hived in it, and from the strange storehouse he took honey for himself and his parents. He seems to have seen in this incident a sort of omen of good fortune. Probably he said to himself, "As out of this lion honey has been brought forth, so out of the hated Philistines, who would tear Israel to pieces, shall there come by me a sweet blessing to my people." At any rate, when, a short time later, his wedding-feast was being celebrated in Timnath, he proposed, in accordance with the custom in ancient times, this riddle to his Philistine guests and acquaintances. "Out of the eater," said he, "came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. If ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty sheets and thirty change of garments." Of course they did not know the answer. At last they forced his bride to coax the answer from him, and on the last day of the wedding-feast they gave him their reply. "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" said they. Samson knew that his wife had been false to him and that the story of his adventure was out. Then with a daring quite as notable as that with which he had

killed the lion, he hurried to Ashkelon, another Philistine city, and soon returned with the garments of thirty men whom he had slain, with which he redeemed his pledge.

The story reads at first like mere rude jesting and bloody sport. It is clear, however, that under cover of his riddle Samson meant to intimate to his foes themselves the defiance that was already burning within him. In the honey from the carcass of the lion which he had slain he had seen a divine omen of the blessing that was to come even out of the oppressor of Israel, and with the recklessness which was part of his character he intimated vaguely even to the wedding guests what they and their countrymen might expect from him. He was going to tear this Philistine lion in pieces and gather from its slain carcass honey for his people Israel; and the thirty men, lying dead at Ashkelon, were but the beginning of the slaughter which would befall her foes.

So far the story. But is this all the meaning of Samson's riddle? Does the whole worth of the story end with the Danite's fierce sport with his enemies? Is this narrative nothing but the record of a barbarous jest? Recall what, as I have tried to show, Samson represents. What was he in-

tended to teach his own age? What is he intended to teach us? This, and this alone: that strength comes through obedience to God. Remembering that Samson's riddle acquires a deeper significance, deeper, no doubt, than the author of it understood, but a significance which makes it worth our consideration as the incident itself would not be. It seems to me, indeed, to utter what we may call the great riddle of human life, the strangest fact which falls under the observation of men, the enigma which they are continually forced to solve, and the solution of which lies in that truth which in his coarse, emphatic way, Samson represented. Let me show you what I mean.

The riddle is, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." That is to say, out of that which seems to consume and destroy have come forth nourishment and support; out of that which appears oppressive and terrible have come forth benediction and happiness. Is not this strange enough to be called a riddle, and yet is it not the riddle of human life, the fact which on every side confronts us?

I might show, for example, that the difficulties which we have to overcome in the pursuit of our most cherished projects are the means of our

highest growth and greatest usefulness. This is so even in the sphere of common secular life. A man whose pathway is smooth and sunny and strewn with flowers does not usually reach as high a level of character as the one whose way is rough and dark and full of pitfalls. There are more, I honestly believe, who go wrong through having too many so-called blessings than there are who go wrong because life is too hard for them. Very few indeed are they who do not meet lions in the way, to whom life is not a struggle, if not with outward obstacles, at least with inward ones; and when a child of fortune does appear he is very apt to end as a child of misery. But the overcoming of obstacles makes the muscles of the human spirit strong and well developed. Conflict makes good soldiers. Wresting victory from the unwilling hands of destiny makes the enjoyment of it keener and leaves the victor strong for fresh enterprises.

Stanley has lately written these words, which are worth noting as coming from the pen of one who has braved the dangers of the African forest and come out a hero. He says, "The bigger the work, the greater the joy in doing it. That whole-hearted striving and wrestling with difficulty, the laying hold with firm grip and level

head and calm resolution of the monster, and tugging and toiling and wrestling at it, to-day, to-morrow, and the next, until it is done,—it is the soldier's creed of forward, ever forward; it is the man's faith that for this task he was born." Such, too, has always been the testimony of those who have accomplished great things in life. Edmund Burke, that philosophic statesman, says, "Difficulty is a severe instructor set over us by the supreme ordinance of a parental Guardian who knows us better than we know ourselves, as He loves us better too. He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves and sharpens our skill; our antagonist is our helper."

It has been by hard work, by the bitter experience of failures, by learning the lessons of disappointment, by profiting from mistakes, that the strong men of history have become what they were. The thinkers whose words have molded the beliefs of men have wrestled with doubt and grappled with the problems of thought through many a painful hour before they have climbed to the position where they can speak and make men hear. The orators to whose speech multitudes have listened and who have seemed to have at their command every faculty of persuasion and argument have had to blunder and fail a hundred

times before acquiring their skill. And the men who climb to the zenith of commercial success have had first in many instances to toil, watch, learn, and struggle, till the secret of success was won. We do not hesitate to say that difficulty is man's best friend. It calls out his powers. It sets his wits at work. It disciplines his mind. It steadies his brain. It trains him in self-control. It enables him to shoulder heavy burdens. It feeds him while it seems to consume him, and blesses when it appears to oppose. No man should fear it. It is the common lot ordained by Providence for our highest good, and like Samson's lion, when overcome, it will have honey in its frame.

If true in ordinary work, this is emphatically true in respect to the attainment of moral character. Those men have the deepest hold on truth who have had to fight for it; to whom doubt and unbelief have not been passing dreams, but horrible realities; and who have discovered, after many a storm and gale, the quiet harbor of faith, where now they float in peace. So temptation has a divine work to do in the strengthening of moral fiber. We are, indeed, taught to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." No man should needlessly covet it. It is not wise to stir up the

lions that will be glad of a chance to devour us. Nevertheless, the Bible also says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." Was not Jesus Himself ordained to pass through temptation? Was it not necessary for the perfecting of His power to save? Even so does the resisting of it make us all strong.

Mark you: it is the resisting and conquering it which make us strong, not playing with evil or the reckless inviting of it. But God has placed us in a world where we must fight if we would win; where the broad way leads to death and the way of life is strait and narrow; where we must play the part of soldiers if we would not play the part of slaves. Yet He has made this very fact to inure to the benefit of those who strive for the good and the true. The very necessity of watchfulness forces them to learn how to stay awake. The struggle against evil makes them hate it more, and more completely triumph over it. They come out of the discipline of life with a special strength which is infinitely greater than that with which they began the fray; and their souls have grown by the painful struggle into a vigorous faith and determination and special

knowledge, which may be called, in comparison with others, truly gigantic.

So too, I might show that the conflicts through which the Church and the truth of God have passed have not been without beneficial consequences. Jesus expected the history of his Church to be one long record of conflict. He foretold persecutions, subtle assaults of evil from without and within; slow growth in the face of hostile surroundings; and how clear and accurate His forecast was has been demonstrated by the facts of nineteen centuries. If ever we are disposed to wonder why the progress of Christianity has not been more rapid, let us not fail to remember that He who founded Christianity expected just such a future for it as it has actually had. Yet this long conflict has not been wholly evil, as Israel's experience may serve to show. The young gospel found itself at the first confronted by the mighty empire of Pagan Rome. For nearly three centuries they grappled in mortal conflict. One or the other of them had to die. It was a tremendous enterprise to undermine the constitution of the ancient world; to disobey the idolatrous mandates of the society about them; to be true to Christ in an empire whose supreme law was to worship the emperor; to endure the hatred of

men, the constant peril of life, and as the conflict thickened to die in great numbers for the sake of their Christian faith. But who does not know that the very blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church; that persecution only made the faith of Jesus mightier; that it strengthened the power of the infant Church until at last the persecuted empire laid down its sword and acknowledged that the Galilean had conquered? It would verily seem, if we may judge of Christian history, that the times of persecution have been often the times of richest spiritual blessing and of greatest proportionate benefit to the Church of the Crucified.

So also may we find an illustration in the conflict with intellectual unbelief which likewise has marked the history of the Christian Church. This conflict began with Paul's speech at Athens, and it still continues. Faith has also had to fight its way. Old foes take new faces, or are joined by new recruits. If anyone be disposed to hesitate in view of the intellectual unbelief of the modern world, let him reflect that it is as old as Christianity. It, too, has brought forth good. It has forced Christians to show why they believe; to understand what they believe; to hold their truth with intelligence; to think it over and over again, to correct mistakes. Scientific and philosophical

lions have never ceased to attack the Samson of whom we speak, but I have not the shadow of a doubt that, though the champion of faith may be clawed and wounded by his adversaries, there will be found at last honey in the lion, and that—which is what we all want—truth will be helped forward by the struggle. I do not think that it is possible to read the story of the progress of Christian thought without seeing that the eater has brought forth meat, and that from the strong has come forth sweetness.

Once more I might point you to that form of the riddle of life which is found in the universal mission of suffering and sorrow among men. By common admission this is the problem of problems, the riddle that in pain and agony thousands are wrestling with this very hour, the dark enigma of human life. No soul is free from a share in the universal heritage of pain. There is scarcely a single life which has not at some time sounded the depths of darkness, over whom the great waters of anguish have not rolled. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together. There are times when human life seems unutterably sad, so brief and yet so full of suffering; so pleasant and yet so crowded with broken hopes and shattered longings. Below the noise of trade, the

laughter of the children, and the mingled cries of the market-place and the forum, we may hear the solemn undertone that rises in all ages and places from the sorrows of humanity; and who can help asking, "O Lord, how long?" Humanity is always more or less a "man of sorrows," and the longer we live the more are we apt to feel that in and by itself existence is profoundly sad. What the ultimate and complete solution of this enigma of suffering will be we do not pretend to say; yet this at least is clear, that those who have faith in God have found suffering and sorrow doing more than anything else to make them spiritually strong. Their testimony is that they never grasped the reality of life until they did so amid tears; that they never understood their God or their Saviour till they had learned to mourn; that they never fully cast down self from its unlawful throne till they had yielded submission in suffering to God; that they never felt sin so hateful, the world so empty, God so real and heaven so near, as when affliction had come upon them. Every one of us, doubtless, knows something of this experience. We must, if we be at all children of God. Men have found in sorrow a priceless gain to match. They have discovered in the monster that would overwhelm them a faithful friend who has taught

them most needful lessons. They have attained through the patient bearing of pain, through the humble endurance of trouble, a refinement of character, a sweetness of disposition, a gentle, sympathetic tenderness, a quiet but an implicit trust, which has made them seem as beautiful to us as they must be dear to God. As the Christ Himself wrested from His sorrows power to save us, came from Gethsemane and Calvary with the sweetest of all sympathy, the tenderest of all love, the strong Son of God, He has forever cast at least this much light on the dark enigma, and taught us to believe that the eater will bring forth meat, and out of the strong there will come sweetness.

Thus in Samson's riddle seems to me to be expressed in a quaint form the riddle of human life; and in the light of what I remarked, to be the specific truth which Samson was raised up to teach, may we leave the answer that we are to give to the great riddle, as in one or another form it will be presented to and pressed upon us each. You will find, as no doubt you have already found, that nothing you undertake can be accomplished without difficulty, and that the higher the aim you select, the greater, the more subtle, will the obstacles be. You will find that temptation to do wrong will dog your steps, will

appear in a hundred forms, will sometimes fairly overwhelm you by its plausible reasonings and its golden offers. If you follow Christ you will find that opposition will meet you and often in ways harder to resist than if it were open persecution, and that unbelief will never cease to rail against your faith. Then you need not expect to be exempt from sorrow. Now perhaps life is sunshine, but the clouds and storms will come and you will join the long procession of your suffering fellow-mortals who fear the Christ.

Thus the riddle of life will be forced upon you and often will it seem insoluble; and you will be ready to exclaim, "Why has God doomed me to such a lot?" But who is the strong man? Samson was raised up to teach this single truth: strength comes through obedience to God. Let a man devote his mind and heart to God; let his supreme desire be in all circumstances to obey God, and he will find this answer to the riddle of life, that the very thing which threatens to consume him in reality makes him strong; that no bitter cup is filled for him to drink which is not sweetened as he drinks it. "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." He will find that life has an infinitely grander end than mere material prosperity or

personal pleasure; that life is meant to be the learning of truth, the knowing of God, the attainment through these of perfect character. For us men there is no more necessary means of reaching the end than the overcoming of obstacles. It is to him that overcometh that Jesus said, "He shall sit with Me on My throne."

Make God your Master. Resolve to obey Him at all hazards. Put Him in the supreme place in your faith and conduct, and then go forward fearless in the path of duty, even though your adversary as a roaring lion goeth before you. Meet difficulty, temptation, and trial, you must. If you do not serve God, you must meet them just the same. But if you serve Him you may meet them and triumph over them, may even wrest from them a blessing; and find in the struggle with them unlooked for good. You will thus solve the riddle of life, and while others are hopelessly entangled you will know the answer. You will be strong with the strength which God supplies. If God is for you, who can be against you? After the battle of life is over the God you have served will place the crown upon your head, and you will be more than conqueror through Him who loved you.

O, brothers, many of you, I doubt not, are

sorely tried and heavily burdened, many of you find yourselves confronted with great obstacles, and realize that if life is to be noble it must be a hard fought battle. I pray you, take God with you into the fight. Fight in His name and for Him. Give Him your supreme allegiance. Then you need not fear but that when life is over you will see in the better world that its discipline was the means of your deliverance, that faith did solve, in fact, the strange enigma, and that even what you thought hard and unkind was that from which you drew your richest benediction.

V

PETER'S SHADOW, OR UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE

V

PETER'S SHADOW, OR UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE

"And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. . . . Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them."—ACTS v. 12, 15.

THIS scene will not appear incredible if we observe how every epoch in the history of revelation was marked at its beginning by a prodigious display of miraculous powers. Thus, for example, the exodus of Israel from Egypt, the journey through the wilderness, and the conquest of Canaan record many such scenes. The ten plagues were God's solemn testimony to both His people and His foes of His mighty power; and as we follow the march of the sons of Jacob and see the Red Sea divided, manna given from heaven every morning, waters flowing out of the flinty rock, the streams of Jordan standing still, and the walls of Jericho falling down, we realize that not Moses or Joshua, but Jehovah Himself was the leader of Israel. So, too, when the

kingdom of Ephraim had revolted from its God, and when Elijah and Elisha labored for its reformation, another era of miracles was granted. The three years' drought, the fire descending on the sacrifice on Carmel, as well as the returning showers, were supernatural answers to Elijah's prayer, and the life of his successor in the prophetic office was one long series of miraculous deeds.

The same features marked, to a greater or less extent, the ministry of other prophets; but when we come to the greatest prophet of all, and to the beginning of the new Christian era, then with redoubled energy does the omnipotence of the God in Christ manifest itself. Men have doubted and sought to explain away the miracles of Jesus, but if it be once realized that in Him God is incarnate, the lesser displays of power will appear not strange but natural. If with the exodus the fierce wrath of Jehovah vented itself in ten plagues; much more, with the incarnation, might the love of the Father utter itself in deeds of supernatural grace. So, beyond all reasonable doubt, Christ's life was glorified by a multitude of miracles. Those recorded of Him in our Gospels are only samples. He trod as God upon earth, though in the lowly likeness of man. Before His coming

sickness and death fled away, as thus in confession that He was to be their final conqueror.

But the personal ministry of Christ on earth was short. It was then followed by that of the Spirit, which is indeed still the ministry of Jesus, but carried on in a different way. But with what reason was its beginning also marked by a profusion of miracles? As the last and greatest epoch in revelation, we should expect this. The opposite would have been out of analogy with all God's previous methods. There was still need to authenticate these converted fishermen as the apostles of God; there was even greater need to encourage their own hearts by the tokens of Christ's power and presence; there was need also to illustrate in the most striking way the doctrines of the new gospel. It is altogether credible,—it is altogether what we should expect to find,—that "many wonders and signs were done by the apostles"; and I think we can imagine nothing more likely to impress the apostle himself and all who saw it with the peace, the fullness, the joyfulness, and the divine source of the gospel of Jesus than this in which, as he walked the streets of Jerusalem, the very shadow of Peter falling on the sick about him healed them all. Peter himself must have

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felt that he was the instrument of a power mighty enough to change and save the world.

But while we may thus accept without a doubt the literal truth of this narrative, it suggests another truth not miraculous at all and one which may be profitably applied to us all. It is an example of a man doing good unconsciously; of influence for good emanating from a man without his directly willing it, simply because he himself is "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." The shadow of Peter is an illustration of unconscious influence and of the secret by which such influence may be exerted in the right direction; and I am sure that in a world like this, in which we are so dependent upon each other, no topic ought more strongly to commend itself to our earnest thought. Let me use this incident to illustrate this theme.

1. First, let me remark upon the fact itself of unconscious influence, and how truly each of us ought to feel that what we are and what we do make for good or ill an impression on our fellow-men. I imagine that we shall best realize the influence which we unconsciously exert upon others if we consider the influence which others unconsciously exert upon us. Every man must feel that it is easier for him

to assimilate impressions from the world about him than to originate for himself,—that he receives far more than he creates; and that by far the greater part of what he receives glides in subtly and silently from sources which have no idea of how much they are impressing him.

The human mind is very receptive as a rule. It is in many respects the creation of circumstances, though we would not admit that it is altogether so. It grows in many ways like the plants and flowers of the garden, which draw from the soil beneath, from the air around them, and from the rain which falls upon their leaves the nutriment they need. So does every man, I presume, feel that he draws into him from the society about him, from the various changes of Providence, which are to him like the changes of the seasons, and still more from the moral and intellectual atmosphere about him, do what he may. He must breathe, draw from all of them, I say, influences which he makes in turn his own possession and assimilates into his own mind, until they become part of himself, so that he could not say any longer if they were originally his own, or where he obtained them. Most minds that are at all quick are like sensitive plates on which the world's light plays with its

invisible forces, and sketches with its invisible fingers pictures that seldom fade away. Most minds are sponge-like, absorbing the element in which they are placed by Providence. I know there is more in the mind than this power to receive and absorb. There is the power to make these influences one's own, as I have said; and sometimes the power to apparently originate,—absolutely to begin,—an idea. But we must confess that this latter is seldom done, and that it is more often true that, like these people of Jerusalem, we live under the shadow of other men's lives.

Take as our first illustration of this the way in which as children we used to receive impressions. I suppose no man can look back to his childhood without remembering how some of the strongest motives which he ever felt were produced by events and people and circumstances, the influence of which no one else understood. Some passing word, dropped from the lips of one who forgot it as soon as it was spoken, has lingered in our minds like a mustard-seed and in time became a great tree. Some book we read has given our tastes a bias for life either for good or evil. Some slight deed of kindness which we received has stored up an inexhaustible fund of gratitude in

our hearts and made us, in turn, desire to fill our own lives with its same spirit. Some slight word of encouragement in trying circumstances has nerved us afterwards for noble deeds. Go back into the morning of your lives, and note how much more influence examples had on you than teaching; how much more you received from persons than from books; how far it is true that the character which you have since developed was molded by trifles, by forgotten passages in the lives of others, by some shadow that came over you from another's character. I believe it was Benjamin West who said, "A kiss from my mother made me a painter." If so, the great artist's experience was not peculiar. Did the daughter of Pharaoh think when she took the child Moses into the palace, that the education he would receive was to prepare him to set his people free and give laws to all mankind? Did the young lad David know when he defended his father's flock from the lion and the bear, how God was making him strong in soul and arm so as to deliver and defend his people Israel? Little, indeed, did they know that they were being trained, and little do we realize how our sensitive minds in childhood and youth absorbed principles that have made or marred our character for time and eternity.

Then, too, mark how in adult years, at least in the opening years of manhood and womanhood, we are influenced unconsciously by others. Take, for example, the influence of men of history,—of the characters about whom we have read. The past pours itself like a mighty deluge upon each one of us, and all the more if we have learned to gaze upon its broad tumultuous waters. It is true that we consciously receive fewer influences from books than from experience; but this statement must be modified so as to admit that we receive vast influence through books, if not from them. They are the means by which we are made acquainted with past generations. They are the glasses through which we look at distant ages. They bring these near, put us in contact with them, and open the gates that the torrents may rush in. I need not add that this is unconscious influence. These men have long passed away; their lives have long since been finished. We can judge them now in all their parts, see where they failed and where they succeeded; perhaps we can assign the reason for their success or failure. They know not how their influence has lived after them, and the shadow of their names and deeds fallen on posterity.

It would be easy to collect illustrations of such

influence. I have read that when Guido studied the works of Michael Angelo he began "to feel within him the risings of genius,"—to feel the fire of his own inspiration kindled from the brilliant light of the great master,—so that he exclaimed, "I too am a painter." I have read how Ignatius Loyola, when suffering from a severe wound received in battle, began to read The Lives of the Saints as a diversion, and how his own ready soul caught the contagion from the martyrs of the past, until he resolved to surpass their devotion to what he believed to be the holiest of all causes; and from that resolve the Jesuit order sprang. Bad as we think its influence has been, it was at least born from the influence exerted on its founder's mind by his communion with the devotion and sacrifice of those who had long passed away.

So examples might be multiplied. The early missionaries who went on heroic errands for God and humanity have done their work not merely by laying the foundations of God's temple in the wilderness, but also by stimulating others to follow them as builders of it. What have the great statesmen of any nation not done to infuse into the minds of posterity the principles which they obeyed? The Bible itself also contains many an illustration in the same line. It is easy to see how

the characters of Moses and Joshua stirred the Jewish heart to the end; how Solomon influenced later thought; how even Christianity was nursed on the influence of her Jewish ancestry, so that not a few faults as well as much that was true and good came to her from the influence of Hebrew saints and of Hebrew history. There is no intelligent man who does not feel the force of past examples. The ages gone also pour some of their unconscious influence into the life of each one. We have our heroes and our ideals, our favorite scenes and pictures, our models taken from what we have heard or read in the eloquent pages of the past, and more perhaps than we are aware do these stamp themselves in living impressions on our receptive minds.

Nor is it only the shadow of dead men's lives under which we move. Is it not equally true that people about us influence us more than they know? Does not everyone who has had any experience of life feel some anxiety at beholding a younger warrior, in whom he is interested, go out to the long battle? And why? He may have now the best principles. He may have professed the most exalted ideas. He may scorn whatever is base and low. But alas, he will be exposed to an influence as subtle as miasma,

which may bring on fatal moral disease! He will see, perhaps, how his employers are not in fact the honorable men they are esteemed to be, and yet how they are successful and their fair names unstained. He will see how strict moral principles are held not to apply to business transactions. He may discover that success is the only god of the street and money its only reward. And slowly the influence of the world, which is all unconscious of his presence, penetrates and spoils him. The world did not mean to ruin his character, to make him deny his religion, or to do anything, good or bad, for him. But he could not resist its unconscious influence, he could not stand against its tide; and once swimming with the tide, once having his early principles undermined, he may go down all the faster until he is cast out by the now virtuous indignation of the world that has misled him. Who can stop the spread of these waves which widen outward? Who does not feel himself moved by them? How many do they not wholly carry away?

Such is our life. Such are the influences which others bring to bear upon us individually. The same is true of communities and of nations, as might easily be shown. The character of a people is slowly formed by the accretion of in-

fluence,—from antiquity, from other nations, even from soil and climate,—and these are fused into the national character by some force peculiar to itself. Revolutions also do not originate suddenly. They are the result of many years' influence, where the forces have been slowly at work which at length have culminated in a crash. So the world moves, rises and falls, perpetuates the past, transmits to one part the lives and thoughts of another part, no one living unto himself, but all working together for weal or woe. As societies and as individuals we can hardly overstate the effect on us of unconscious influence. We live in the shadow of other men's lives.

Now in all this we see the reverse of the picture, the converse of my proposition. But the proposition itself needs no further proof. What we have judged to be true of others is true also of ourselves,—as we receive we also give; and with what effect? May we reverse the picture and behold the influence which we unconsciously must exert in our turn? You cannot say that you are too humble and obscure to exert such influence. There is no man, unless he has sunk into the very gutter, that has not some one who looks up to him. There is no one without his

circle of friends, who has not some on whom he makes an impression, even if he be the humblest and the most obscure.

It is almost too trite a remark to make that nature teaches us the power of little things. The atoms make the world. The beat of the waves wears away in time the hardest rock. So also even the humblest toiler, the workman at his forge or loom, does his part in the great organism of society. The individual soldiers make the regiment. I know that by themselves they could do nothing. They need the guidance and genius of their commanders. But once organized, as we all are in this world, no one dare doubt that he makes some mark on some other immortal soul. He throws some shadow on his fellow-creature's path.

Truly this is an appalling state of things. It discloses an overwhelming responsibilty which we would not willingly assume. It is a fact from which men shrink back and cry with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" It seems to lay on us the burden of we know not what,—an indefinite load of accountability. But it is a fact. It needs no apostle to cast a healing shadow on suffering humanity, and no demon to cast a shadow of ill. We are doing it ourselves, some

of us throwing out such baleful influence on the country that though we utter not a word we are blasting and cursing many souls, and others casting such gentle, pure, and holy influence, that men are glad to put themselves in our way, as they did in Peter's. All the finer is such a life if its healing shadow falls unconsciously and without an effort, out of the fullness of what we are, on this troubled, wearied, sin-sick world.

2. We are then, on the other hand, led by this scene in Peter's life to what is the one sure secret whereby this unconscious influence may be made a blessing to others. Since we are speaking of what is called unconscious influence, or influence that is incident, indirect, and exerted without the knowledge of the one from whom it flows, it is evident that this usually proceeds from that somewhat indistinct but most certain thing in every man which we call his character. This is implied in the illustrations we have already used. Our influence usually does not flow so much from our professions as from what we actually believe and act upon. If we are consistent, and our professions are sincere, then all the greater is their power; but if we are inconsistent, and show by our lives that we do not believe what we profess nor act upon it, then

the profession is worse than nothing, and the influence proceeds from the character, even though we may seek to hide it. For it does not take long for the world to discover hypocrisy. Few men can keep up a perfect disguise. The other objects which they are pursuing will break through the deception and reveal it. Thus real life, this thing called character, will have its say and do its work, though the outward reputation be old and strong. No man need flatter himself that he is exerting a good influence by any insincere profession. Time and circumstances will tear off the mask and leave the true features exposed. There is nothing hid that shall not be known and come abroad. You may exclaim that it is unreasonable in the world not to believe your word, but if you know that word to be false, you may be sure that somewhere you have let your secret out. At any rate, unconscious influence flows from what we are, from the spirit we actually carry with us day by day, from the aims we really have most in mind, from the thoughts we chiefly love, and which, to a degree that perhaps would surprise us, mold our outward actions in spite of the most watchful care.

The question, so far as moral influence is con-

cerned, is this, How should we fortify our characters; what shall they be, so that, when we are off our guard and engaged in the duties of daily life, they may of themselves exert an influence for good upon those about us? There is just one—one only, secret of such unconscious influence. It is not culture; it is not refinement; it is not morality. It is something which Christ alone can give, something with which he had filled to overflowing this apostle's soul. It is the Holy Spirit. Look, for example, at Peter. But a few days before that scene the Spirit of Pentecost had descended on him and his brethren. Before that his shadow produced no such effect as it does now; but I doubt not that now his very face told that he was a changed man. It was not Peter's eloquence which gave him his influence. It was not his personal traits of mind with which he blessed the multitude, though these traits made him the foremost man in the early Church. But it was that he was filled with the Spirit whom Jesus had promised and now had sent; a Spirit who had flooded Peter's mind as of old God's glory had filled with light the holy of holies in the temple; a Spirit that was divine and so able to bless, heal, and comfort, through Peter, the multitude about him. Now, if the Holy Spirit

dwell at all in a man, it is in his character, in his heart that He dwells. There He makes His abode; and just in proportion as every heart is filled with this divine Presence, may we be sure that the influence which we unconsciously exert will always be for good, not for evil.

Yet I would not have you look at this truth in such a way as to imagine that this gift of the Spirit is merely a miraculous, outward endowment. There is another way of putting the teaching of our text, and that is, that in order to insure an unconscious influence for good in the world, every man must give great heed to his inner, hidden heart life. There are some who actually never seem to think of this. They live on the surface. They are absorbed in things outside of them, and only think at all so far as may be in the line of their business. In that they think hard enough, but they do not like to probe down into their own character. They enjoy too much the pleasures of the senses. They are too much delighted with the pursuit of knowledge, it may be. To isolate their own minds, and fix on them the attention which they give to others, would, they feel, soon involve such self-reproach as they do not care to face. So they neglect their own characters altogether. Their inner life gives them no

concern; they do not stop to consider how much evil their very neglect of character may itself cause. Such men, at any rate, cannot be religious, for this inner life of the soul is the secret of all spiritual and moral power, and he who makes his shadow a healing one must look within.

Such is the lesson which the Bible teaches in the lives of its saints. See, for example, Elijah. He came and went like a phantom before Ahab and Israel, but a most real prophet of the Almighty was he. We think of him daring to upbraid for his crimes a guilty king; daring even to call down disaster on his land; above all do we imagine him in that dramatic scene on Mount Carmel when he set off the power of Jehovah in the fire from heaven against the impotence of Baal and his priests. But was he the real Elijah? By no means. The real man was shown when he bowed in agonizing prayer before God, when he communed with God in the wilderness; when on Horeb he heard God speak to him in the still, small voice. It was the communion which Elijah had with Jehovah which enabled him to dare the wrath of the king; it was this which made him the spiritual giant he was, and caused him to glow and burn wherever he went with the influence which alone could save his deluded people.

Or see David, the poet-king. What was the secret of his influence,—what is the great source of his influence to this day? Was it that he conquered his enemies? that he erected a throne? that he replaced Saul? These were not the real causes of power even then; still less are they the causes of his influence now. That lies in his inner religious life. It is because David entered so deeply into the fellowship of God, that out of his own heart he sang the strains which find an echo in all Christian hearts to-day, that he lives in our remembrance as one of God's best saints. What have the Psalms not done for the world? David is dead, but his inner life gives food for millions, healing to the sick and comfort to the sad. As some one has finely written, "The Psalter is the sacred book of the world. Cromwell led his men to victory with the 68th Psalm; Luther strengthened his heart with the vigor of the Psalms. Wallace had his psalter hung before him at his execution and died with his eyes fixed upon it. Polycarp, Hildebrand, Huss, Melanchthon, gave their last breath to the words of a Psalm. One Psalm alone has engraved itself on the lives of men. The penitence of the contrite soul has loved to breathe out its miserere. Thomas Arnold had the 51st

Psalm read to him when dying, and John Rogers recited it as he went to the stake. Jeremy Taylor transformed it into a prayer. Lady Jane Grey repeated its cry for mercy as she ascended the scaffold, and Sir Thomas More as he laid his head on the block. Augustine had written on the wall opposite the bed where he lay sick, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,' and Bernard passed on with this same verse upon his lips."

What an influence to flow from one book,—and that book in spirit the work of one man! For though David did not write all the Psalms, he struck the key in which other poets continued. Thus from his inner life, from his life with God, from the devotion of his own soul, he threw over the centuries, unconsciously to himself, a shadow in which tens of thousands have found peace and joy. Because he had the spirit of his greater Son, he became like Christ himself, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

Now, my hearer, do you not think it worth your while to do what you can to cast a healing shadow on the world around you? Surely the world needs all the help you can render. It is sick and sorrowful, and needs comfort; sinful, and

needs the blessing of all the good examples and the good deeds you can give it. Then be it remembered that what you purposely strive to do for the good of others is not all you might do. Unknown to you your character will tell upon the world, will help or hinder your intentions. From you men may draw encouragement, may be stimulated to labor more cheerfully, suffer more patiently, struggle more bravely, and believe more firmly, or may be disheartened and be led to falter and give up.

You may move through the world, if you will, like Peter along the streets of Jerusalem, scattering on every side joy, hope, and peace. What a life to live! How thankful we should be that such a life is possible! But if you are to do this, then must you pay the price. You must surrender your life altogether to Jesus Christ. You must strengthen your faith and love by communion with Him. You must be willing to sacrifice whatever He demands, whenever He demands it. You must, like Peter, fill your heart with the Holy Spirit received from Christ's hand. Then you need not vex yourself with the question whether you are doing good or not by your influence, for you will not be able to help doing good,—it will flow out from your words and

deeds, and unknown to you, you will cast a healing shadow over the hearts and lives of others. Men will glorify in you the God whom through you they have come to know as a God of love.

VI

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

VI

THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life." —JOHN xiv. 6.

THE second and third of these predicates explain and define the first. Notice that the first statement, "I am the way," is a figurative one. In it Jesus uses a material object to express a spiritual truth. He spoke in answer to the question of Thomas, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Jesus wanted to teach the disciples that even if they did not know much about heaven and the future, yet they possessed in their relationship to Him the means whereby all that was good and heavenly would be attained by them. He said, "I am the way, . . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." Notice that the second and third predicates are not figures at all, but plain and direct statements. They are meant literally. "I am the truth." "I am the life." They were evidently added in order to explain or define the sense in which He said He was the

way; and the whole sentence is to be accordingly understood. "I am the way," said Jesus, "because I am the truth and the life."

Now to be taught the way to God is man's supreme need. We instinctively use the figure, even though we know that it is but a figure. Moral distance is naturally represented by spacial distance. The sinner is pictured not only by Christ but by himself as in a far country: and though God be not far from any of us, man feels after Him, like the blind who have lost their way, if haply he may find Him. To reach God is the confessed goal of human life. To know the way to Him is our chief necessity. So testify the history of all religions that ever have held sway over humanity. So testify the longings and felt needs of every thoughtful heart. Sometimes God is thought of as to be reached at the end of the present life; sometimes, and more correctly, as to be reached at once. But in either case the way to Him is what man needs to know. How is God to be made manifest to our thought and consciousness? How is the human soul, with its sins and fears, to ascertain God's forgiveness and to be positively reconciled to Him? How are we to live so as at last to attain the divine presence in the world beyond? God is necessary for our

happiness. Life is unfinished until it be in harmony with God. Only in God can we be satisfied and saved. And so the cry of all earnest, awakened souls the world over is for God. Jew and Gentile join in the search. The only question is, What is the way? To answer this question is to solve the supreme problem of human life.

Jesus Christ claimed to solve the question in a unique manner. He did not say, "I can show you the way to God." He did not come as a wise man or even as a prophet. He said, "I *am* the way." He evidently meant that He was such a being that by virtue of what He was, access to God had become possible for man, that alone through some personal relationship to Himself could men find God. It was a unique answer to the question, "What is the way?" Others had pointed out ways of reaching God. None had claimed to *be* the way.

It was also a sublime claim which could be made only by one who believed Himself to occupy a position, between men and God, of solitary grandeur and importance. In making it He virtually declared Himself the God-man, the living, personal Mediator between humanity and Deity. He is that or He is nothing, according to

His own statement; and if He be that, then He ought to have the supreme place in our allegiance and trust. If then, as I have said, the words truth and life were meant to explain the sense in which He is the way, we must examine the claims expressed by them in order to understand and accept the claim expressed by it. Let us question them in turn.

Jesus Christ then said, "I am the truth." We not only have it on the direct authority of one that heard Him say it, but it agrees with many other of His recorded sayings. It is put in a way that is characteristic of Him. He said, "I am the light of the world." "I am the bread of life." "I am the door." "I am the vine." He also used expressions equivalent in meaning to this, though put in other forms. To Pilate He said, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice." Even in the Sermon on the Mount He spoke as one having authority, putting His thought supreme above that of all other men. It is quite credible that He also said, as John reports it, "I am the truth." He also made belief in Himself to be the condition of entering the kingdom of God,

which is the kingdom of the truth. Observe carefully His language. He did not say merely that He was true; that what He taught was right; that it was worthy of credence. He does not present Himself to us as merely a teacher of the truth. Paul could have said that—yea, any teacher, inspired or uninspired, might reasonably make the claim. If this were all, Jesus would take His place with the long list of wise men to whom the world has listened. He might be a great instructor of the race, greater than Socrates or Solomon; but He would never deserve to occupy the peculiar place which He does occupy in the faith of the Church, nor would His religion necessarily be the absolute and universal one. There is a great difference between saying, "I am true" and "I am the truth."

But, on the other hand, He certainly did not mean that He was the only truth or all truth. He was speaking of morals and religion, of the way to God, and the winning of eternal life. He did not say "I am truth," but "I am the truth," the truth paramount. "I am the truth which all men who would find God need to know; the truth which in the matter of man's salvation is essential; the truth before which all other truths sink into comparative insignificance. I do not

merely teach it: but I am it." In so saying, Jesus declared that His existence was the supreme fact in human history, the knowledge of which was more important than any other kind of knowledge. Only by taking His personality and work into account could men rightly think of God and duty and heaven. That He is; and what He is, the Christ of God, the revealer of the Father, the Son of God and Son of man, is the truth paramount in the whole sphere of human knowledge and the whole history of human life.

It must, I think, be evident that He could have spoken thus only if that idea of His divine-human personality, which apostles taught and the Church has cherished, be true. If He were but a man, He could not have thus spoken, provided at least that He was sane and honest. Some people have stumbled over the fact that Jesus did not expressly and prominently teach His own divinity as the apostles did. They forget that He came to be a man, to thrust His humanity into the foreground, that as man He might be man's Saviour. But He did claim rights and powers which only God can have, so that we are sure the apostles were not mistaken; and when He here claimed to be the truth, He asserted for Himself a position so supreme that nothing fully accounts for the claim or

justifies it except the doctrine of the Incarnation. But if the Word did become flesh, if the Son of God did become the Son of man, then does the language of the text become perfectly intelligible. Before such a fact no other can be mentioned, none can be so important, none so full of meaning. Then could He easily say, "I am the truth."

But I would like to persuade you of the rightfulness of Christ's claim not by dogmatic considerations so much as by an actual examination of what He appears to be.

Look, for example, at His character and see if He be not the truth. The wonderful fact about Christ as a moral teacher is that He Himself was all that He taught others to be. In this He stands absolutely alone in the whole list of teachers. Buddha only made an approach to such a claim; but he professed to reach perfection only after a long life of self-discipline. Jesus Christ was from the beginning the perfect embodiment of His own teaching. True, the Epistle to the Hebrews says that He was made perfect through sufferings; but by that was evidently meant that He was made perfectly able to save by the things which He suffered. The New Testament represents Jesus as growing in wisdom and knowledge, but it never represents His growth as consisting in

the removal of sin. On the contrary, it declares Him to have been wholly without sin.

But whatever the Scriptures may say, the fact is, that as we study His character and life it appears absolutely to agree with His own moral teaching. This was the reason why His teaching had such power. It was not altogether new teaching. Men had long known most of the duties which Jesus announced to them. His great command: "Love the Lord thy God . . . and thy neighbor as thyself," was taken from Moses. It was even well known to the Jews, for a lawyer, you remember, once quoted it to Christ. It is possible to find anticipations of Christ's moral teaching even in heathen writers. Some have imagined that it is necessary to show that all was new with Christ; but it is neither necessary nor is it true.

The unique power of Christ's moral teaching lies in these facts: First, that it does not include anything which the surest tests that men can apply prove to be erroneous or false, whereas heathen moralists, while uttering great truths, unite them with folly or wrong. Then, secondly, Christ's moral teaching shows the highest sense of proportion between duties and the grouping of them round the fundamental principle, so that

they make the impression of one great thought, and grow out of one great principle, the thought and principle of love. But, thirdly, Christ's unique power as a teacher of morals lies in the fact that He embodied in His own life His whole teaching. Did He teach the love of God and man? His life expressed just that; for His whole career was nothing but the utterance of love to God and to man. Did He teach the duty of personal, sincere, absolute righteousness? Did He teach humility and meekness and purity? Did He say, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise"? Did He say, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you"? I need not remind you that all this was pictured in His own condition and character for the admiration and imitation of mankind. He could say, "I am the truth." He gives us not a theory of condition nor a treatise on morality, but an actual life, in which all that is good stands forth in real existence. He could say, "Follow Me; for all the truth concerning what man should be I am." This was the main cause of His moral power. This is its main cause now. This excludes Him from comparison with all other teachers. He was and is in the sphere of moral character all that He taught to be the truth.

Then consider, still more particularly, that Christ's teaching about salvation and the way in which we may secure it rests upon and grows out of what He is, so that if you were to take Him away from under it, the whole doctrine would fall in a minute to the ground. This will appear if we look at it from several points of view.

Christ has told the world of God's love for the sinful. The supreme truth which Christianity proclaims is not that God will punish the impenitent. Conscience and the Mosaic law had already proclaimed that, and Christianity simply reaffirms it. Its proper message is that man may be saved from sin and from its consequences. It speaks to a perishing, lost race, telling them that God is like a father waiting for the return of his wandering son; nay, that He has sent forth an invitation to men to seek again His face and home. He is reconciling the world unto Himself. He would have all men to be saved. He desires not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn from his sins and live. Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely. Above all the truths which Christianity proclaims, this soars out as the sun above the stars; it gleams as the diamond among jewels.

But how do we know it to be the truth? Solely because Christ the Son of God came forth from the Father to express in His life and work that love. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ is this truth. He is the love of God personified, incarnate, made manifest. Take Him away and the darkness returns again, for the love of God becomes once more only a speculation or a hope. He could have said, "I am the love of God. I bear it in My being. I express it. I prove it. I represent it, and its reality and its power issue from what I am. I am this truth."

Then, again, Christ has not only proclaimed God's love, but He has insisted that the object of it is to reconcile men with God, and that salvation consists in nothing less than such real reconciliation. Christ's teaching is based on the recognition of sin as a fact, on guilt as requiring atonement, on human life as in rebellion against God. God's love, He said, has provided a way by which the sinner may be reconciled to God. Jesus did not speak of salvation as merely escape from punishment. That is only its negative side. It consists in reunion of heart and life

with God. Eternal life is to know God. This is to be a personal reconciliation,—a reunion of the individual, not of the race or nation,—with His Father.

It is a sublime scheme of redemption which Christianity proclaims. It takes into account the whole nature of God,—His holiness and His love, His wisdom and His unchangeableness; and it shows how these may be satisfied and yet the sinner saved. It takes into account also the whole nature and need of man,—his guilt, requiring atonement; his sinfulness, requiring renewal of heart; his ignorance, requiring revelation; his fear, requiring promises; his doubts, requiring argument and patient education; and shows how all these may be recognized and satisfied, and so the sinner be saved. The keynote of the whole is reconciliation of man with God, and this truth Jesus proclaimed in the plainest way. He called sinners to repent. He said that He was going to lay down His life as a ransom. He insisted that each one must be born again. He sketched the outline of the whole scheme when He said, "I in them, and they in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." This is His teaching. But mark that it all depends on His being what, in the circumstances, He is required to be. He holds the

scheme together as a keystone holds the arch. He is this truth concentrated, if I may so speak. He shows us God and man united in His own person. He is the sacrifice by which human guilt may be removed. He is the power by which the new nature is formed in us through the Holy Ghost. He is the pledge of victory by which our fears and doubts are vanquished. He is the theme by knowing which our minds are enlightened. In short, He is the reconciliation of man and God; and the enjoyment thereof by the race of men will be obtained only as they partake of Him.

Thus could He say, "I am the truth." He could say so without figure. All Bible doctrine is simply the interpretation of Christ, the expansion, so to speak, of His personality and the fruit from His life. All Christian duty is summed up in the imitation of Christ. He is the alpha and omega of God's thought,—the alphabet by which we spell out religion and through which God speaks to us. He is far more than the Founder of Christianity,—He is Christianity, and all that is Christian is an outgrowth from Him. Take Him away, and the whole structure is left without certainty, without proof, and without power. Aye, He is the truth. There He stands in

human history, unrivaled and self-accrediting. As the mists of ignorance are lifted He appears more true than ever. As the mind tries the experiment of other saviors, it turns with new conviction back to Him. As it tests His word, its convictions are again confirmed. The storms of controversy may sweep away other beliefs, but they die at His feet. He has stood the test of centuries, and He is more convincingly true than ever. He is the truth. He guarantees it, He explains it, He embodies it, He makes it,—the truth without which God would be hidden, immortality veiled, and salvation a question. Jesus Christ as an historical fact is the truth which beyond all comparison with any other deserves to be called fundamental and supreme.

But now, observe, He went further. Let us briefly examine the other statement which He joins to this: "I am the life."

It is to be understood, of course, in the same way as the former. He did not say, "I am the living One," as if He meant to affirm His own immortality. That would have been true, but it was clearly not His idea in this place. Nor did He say, "I am life." That also would have been true; for John writes of the eternal Word, "In Him was life." But Jesus said, "I am the life,"

the life, that is, of renewed souls, the power which alone can make humanity truly live, the moral and spiritual vital force of the kingdom of heaven.

It is also evident, I think, that as His claim to be the truth can be fairly explained only by some such idea of His personality as that which the apostles taught, so likewise His claim to be the life can be fairly explained only by some such idea of His spiritual relationship to His people as is taught by the same witnesses. Indeed, in this very chapter it is recorded that He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." "I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." Such expressions imply that the believer is united with Christ by some invisible tie, corresponding to the depending of branches on a vine, and of such a nature that His life supports and works through theirs, and His immortality pledges theirs. "I am," He said, "the life of God's people. They are to abide in Me. I will dwell in them. We two shall have one life. I will live in them and from them shall bring forth the fruits of My power."

But, as in the former case, I would rather persuade you of the truth of this claim than discuss its doctrinal meaning.

That Christ is the life of His own teaching, I have already shown. His person gives power

to His moral commands—power to His doctrine of salvation. On His being their force depends. But is not this marvelously realized in the case of all who recognize that truth? Christ is a power which men feel as a quickening touch. Account for it as we may, when once He really obtains hold of a human mind, He makes it live as it never did before. Life and death are opposites, and by thinking how dead to divine things men are by nature, the meaning of new life becomes clear. They do not love God though He is infinitely beautiful and good. They do not serve others, save in a narrow way, though there is so much need for service. They are indifferent to the claims of many duties. They are absorbed in selfish work and pleasure. They would be glad if there were no God.

Is not this rightly called death? It is the destruction of the best and purest sides of the human being, and the beginning of corruption and moral decay. But is it not the fact that when Christ obtains hold of a man, this death ceases and its opposite begins? We could point you to cases as significant of His power as when He called Lazarus from the grave or the young man of Nain from his bier. Explain the process as we may, the fact of a new life appears. Men

strive after new ideals. They are controlled by new motives. They love new objects. They are impelled by new energies. God becomes their Father, righteousness their aim, and service their desire. Thus Christ shows Himself the life of a soul, and by every test of right living which we can apply He proves Himself to be the author of it.

Still further, He makes life for us in another sense. We often call a thing our life which gives us the most joy and peace. We all know that life is more than drawing breath. Our life consists in the value of the work that we are doing, or in the sweetness of the pleasures that we are tasting; and I affirm that in this sense also Christ is the life. For in the experience of those over whom He does obtain control, He brings the utmost satisfaction which man knows on earth. Nothing is more disappointing in the end than a selfish, worldly life. Nothing is more satisfying than a Christian life. Christ gives us work to do which is worth doing, and which when it is done does not leave mere fatigue behind. He gives us the object in life which is worth realizing and which does not mock us when we reach it as do most of the objects for which men strive. He gives us a hope which is never disappointed, which always

has new promises in store when the lesser ones have been enjoyed; which shines as a star in the darkest night of trouble and breaks like the rising sun upon our dying eyes. He is the life of His people, the eternal spring from which they draw refreshing waters, the perfect satisfaction of their immortal souls.

Then all this rises to a still more sublime idea. He is the life of His people which was taken for their sake, the life-blood. All this is true because He really lives. We do not know how dependent we are on Him any more than we realize how dependent this world is on the sun. He is doing a work for us day by day of which we receive the benefits. He is protecting us from evil. He is maintaining our cause before God. He is governing the world for the sake of His kingdom and its subjects. He is giving us temporal blessing and spiritual help. Thus He is making His truth effective and applying it to our only too reluctant minds. It is not the truth alone which saves, but the Christ who comes to us through the truth; for He, not it, is the life of them who know and test His power.

Does it seem to you doubtful that the world is reaching the better life through the influence and power of Christ in it? Are there not thousands

upon thousands of men and women who seem to you to have found in Him the best character and the best aspirations that it is possible to have on earth? Do you not see the fruits of righteousness and the flowers of holy grace being borne upon this vine? Is it not a wonder to you that those who deny themselves the most for Him find the most pleasure in His service, and that those who follow Him the most closely are the best and happiest of men? Surely these are sufficient signs of the still better life which is beginning and which will be made perfect in God's house above. If so, with what perfect truth could Jesus say, "I am the life."

Now mark the conclusion and climax. If He be thus the truth and the life, then He is, indeed, the way. Taking this truth, sharing this life, a man is fast journeying toward God. Christ can now truly say, "I am the way." Elsewhere He said, "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." To receive Him as the truth, to accept Him as the life, is to enter through the door and to go along the way which leads straight to God.

Are you in this way? In Christ you are safe. If not, will you not enter it? There is no other way. You need atonement, and His blood alone

cleanses from all sin. You need divine love, and He is that love. You need instruction, and He is the truth. You need power, and He is the life. Imagine a man lost in a forest,—baffled, afraid, in danger, lost,—finding a man, a woodsman. Could the latter not say, "I am the way"? Following his guidance, depending on his knowledge, trusting his word, the lost man finds his deliverance. So, I may say, amid the confusion of this world, ignorant and lost are we, and unto us Christ comes, saying, "I am the way," and following His guidance, depending on His knowledge, trusting His word, we shall escape and be delivered. What I have said to prove that He is the truth and the life, ought to convince all that He is the way. I point you to Him. I invite you to Him. He that followeth this way shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

VII

EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY LIGHTS

VII

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"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.—REV. xxi. 23.

"And they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light."—REV. xxii. 5.

ST. JOHN'S description of the new Jerusalem, which in vision he beheld coming down from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, is often regarded as a description of heaven. It is so, but only because it is much more. It is a description of the ideal state of the Church, the realization of her life in her best form, the symbolical picture of that which she is to be and toward which she is continually to strive. This ideal state will no doubt be fully attained only when that final condition of things arrives to which we give preëminently the name of heaven. If we reserve that term for the great consummation which lies beyond the resurrection and the judgment, for that new heaven and earth in which will dwell righteousness, for that distant age and place

of which we know neither the time nor the location, but to which as to an indisputable reality we are pointed, both by our own hopes of immortality and yet more plainly by the Christian Scriptures; if, I say, we confine the term heaven to this final happy state of human existence, we may be confident that then and there first will the ideal of Christian life be attained by the myriads of the redeemed.

But while we thus look forward we should not forget that the ultimate result will be the outgrowth of those spiritual forces which are even now acting upon and in us. Heaven will be the product of the better life which by God's grace has already begun. It will not be established by any reversal of the laws under which we now are, but by their triumph. It will be the fruit of the seed planted here. It will be the glorious issue of the gospel which we now believe. It is an ideal, hovering as it were over our present faulty and struggling lives, an ideal toward which we are to strive, the spirit of which we are as much as possible to realize, and an ideal which by our faith in God and Christ we may be certain will not vanish as we approach it, but will be finally and forever established.

This view of the matter is important. It makes

us see that what the Bible says about heaven is not in the least disconnected with our present duty. It is a practical doctrine when thus viewed. It is not a mere dream of minds weary with present toil and care, not a mere refuge for souls disheartened by the daily battle of life, not a mere compensation for present losses, not, as we so often wrongly make it, a contrast with that we now possess. It is a promise for those who toil, that they shall not be unrewarded, an assurance of the worth of that which now is in Christian experience of the grandeur of that in which it will issue.

The farmer should not dream of an abundant harvest while he idles away his time and lets his fields go to waste. His dream of harvest ought to drive him to the plow and to incessant care for the delicate, springing grain. The citizen must not dream of an old age of fame and wealth and leisure, if he takes his leisure in youth and does not bend his energies to the hard toil which present opportunity offers him. This dream has no possibility of being realized unless he now works and lays the foundations of the future by industry of hand, culture of brain, and refinement of heart. So our Christian dreams of heaven are to be kept in contact with our earthly life. In very scanty measure have they been given us at all in the

pages of the Bible, and then manifestly with the purpose of impelling us to a right use of our present lives and of the agencies which Christ has established on earth for the service of God and man.

So you will observe that John's description of the holy city consists to a considerable degree of negations. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." "I saw," he says, "no temple therein." "There shall be no more curse." "There shall be no night there." But these negations of evil are reported as the result of the possession of positive good which by its unobstructed energy has driven the evil away. God has made all things new, and therefore the former things are passed away. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it, and therefore he saw no temple therein. The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it and His servants shall serve Him, and therefore there shall be no more curse. The glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof, and therefore there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun.

In other words, the fullness of life, knowledge, and enjoyment has destroyed every trace of death,

ignorance, and sorrow. The mingled good and evil which we now meet exists no more. The clouds no more obscure the sun. Disease no more attacks the vital powers. The exuberant vitality of the redeemed souls has shaken off the possibility of evil, and round the life of God in man a new world has formed, one irradiated by the truth, beatified by the love, purified by the Spirit, rejoicing in the presence of God and the Lamb. All this triumph of good over evil is the splendid fruitage of the seed which was sown in tears and nourished through the conflicts of time by the Christ and His people.

Now I venture to call your attention to one item of the apostle's description which contains a specially valuable suggestion, under its figurative form, concerning both our present duty and future hopes. Amid the glories of ideal pictures, John observes the absence of any need of light-giving bodies, because all is illuminated by the brilliant outshining of God and the Lamb. It needs no argument to prove that his language is figurative and symbolical. Light is in Scripture the commonest emblem of knowledge, particularly of moral and spiritual knowledge, and God as the source of this is called by this same appellation,—Light itself. There would seem

then to be little room for doubt as to the meaning of this feature of the inspired and inspiring vision. He means to say that the imperfect, partial, temporary lights by which we now live are to be made needless by the supreme manifestation of Himself which God through Christ will make. Let me try to unfold the ideas which seem to be contained in this pictured thought.

First, there is the implication that the lights by which we now live are in a sense imperfect. They are small and chiefly dull; they are meant to serve a temporary purpose. As I have said, the language is the language of symbol and figure. What John meant to say may perhaps be most clearly seen if we use as an illustration of the text the verse which precedes it. "I saw," John there says, "no temple therein." We can understand what that meant to a Christian Jew. The temple was the supreme symbol of the Jewish faith. It was the place where God dwelt among His people. Its rites illustrated the way in which God was to be approached by man. It was the concrete expression of the old dispensation. It was the embodiment of revelation so far as that had then been made. Consequently, for him to see no temple in the new Jerusalem was as much as

to say that the old means of teaching, the old expressions of the truth, have passed away. He now says that God and the Lamb are the temple of it. The type has been fulfilled and so has ceased to be needed; the reality which it foreshadowed has been reached. The ideal has so far been attained and the temporary structure and the temporary rites which prepared for that ideal have done their work and passed away. In like manner does he speak in our text; only now his view is broader. All the lights by which men now live are but preparations for a better. Man's whole life on earth is to the grander future what the Hebrew dispensation was to the Christian age. We are still in the region of types, though of a greater and less evident kind than those of Moses, and while the lights we live by are as the sun to a candle when compared with what is past, they are but as candles themselves when compared with what is to come.

Thus, reason is one of the lights we now live by; and yet it is not hard to show that reason is but a candle-power illuminating dimly to us the spiritual world. Some men profess to make reason the sole guide of belief and life, but it does not require much agility in logic to show

that on the deepest questions which harass human thought reason has little or nothing to say. I do not mean for one moment to disparage the use of reason even in religion, but simply to suggest that its power and its authority are limited. By reason is meant the intelligence with which we are endowed, the power of observation and reflection which distinguish man from the brute. These are not to be disparaged save when they claim for themselves a power which can be shown not to belong to them. But certainly reason can form conclusions only upon the basis of evidence which has been presented to it. It can scan and meditate upon the external world and draw its conclusions as to the forces which are operating there, as to its past history, so far as records of this remain, and as to its present use. It can examine the mind likewise and draw its conclusions concerning the constitution of the mind and its relation to external things. Reason can study the experience of the past and infer therefrom what is probably the wisest course for men to follow now. It can reflect and speculate and draw its inference concerning both things seen and things unseen. But it can act only on the evidence presented it. If there be any sphere of which it has had no experience it can tell us

nothing. Even when it can tell us something, there is much that it cannot understand.

Moreover, it is a very delicate instrument of knowledge, easily thrown out of order. Let one trifling element of a problem be unobserved, and the conclusions of reason are valueless. Let prejudice or personal preference influence it and it follows instead of leading the will, so that while reason is one of the two or three noblest prerogatives of man, and while every intelligent person is responsible for the use he makes of it, he is a bold advocate indeed who does not admit that it is a partial and imperfect light to live by. What certain answer can it make about the character of God or His will concerning the future, or the means of man's salvation? This, in fact, is substantially the conclusion to which even unbelief has come itself, for after centuries of conflict, and after the world has seen gigantic webs of speculation spun by the alleged reason of mankind, the result has been, professed agnosticism. This seems to me a considerable gain: for it at least confesses that on skeptical principles we can know nothing of the deeper problems which never cease to press upon the human mind.

So, too, conscience is one of the lights we live

by, which again can be shown to be but a partial and imperfect guide. Conscience throws a light which reason, apart from it, does not throw; namely, it reveals to us that there is a difference between right and wrong, and that every man is under supreme obligation to do what is right. It is scarcely credible that this should be if there were not a moral Lawgiver over the world, and hence conscience, like the moon, may be said to reflect a light from a source higher than itself. Yet conscience is but a partial light. It too only acts on evidence presented to us, tells us that of two courses, perhaps, one is right and the other wrong, but it does not tell us of itself all that is right or all that we ought to do. Moreover it is easily blinded, easily bewildered, sometimes like a bad compass pointing in the wrong direction. It has inspired and justified deeds of horrible cruelty and tyranny. It may be so dull of ear as scarcely to hear the demand made on it for a decision. It may mistake forms for realities. It needs itself to be enlightened and quickened in order even to do its own proper work.

Now I add that even revelation is but a partial and in one sense an imperfect light. The Bible does not pretend to give us all the truth, not even all the truth about God. It does not attempt to

solve all the weighty questions which inquiring minds are anxious to put to it. Nothing is more noteworthy than its reserve and its silence when taken in connection with its claims and its teachings. No one judges it aright who does not keep in mind the limitations which it puts upon itself. Even the apostle Paul wrote, "Now we see in a mirror darkly, . . . now I know in part." The Bible throws its light preëminently upon the one great question of man's redemption from sin. Here it is like the sun, and the light it throws is clear and beautiful. In this it reveals what reason could not have discovered, namely, redemption; what conscience would never have made certain, namely, forgiveness. But as the sun does not illuminate the vast universe beyond our system, so the Bible was not meant to cast its light on the entire universe of spirits. True, by its aid we may obtain glimpses that otherwise would be closed to us, suggestions that serve at least to warn us against opposing theories. But its light falls upon the Christ. It is written, as John said his gospel was, that we might believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God. Brilliant is its light when compared with what we would have without it, but it is so manifestly adapted to be man's present guide in practical duty that it is in

no wise derogatory to its claims to say that it is not and does not pretend to be a complete disclosure of truth to the human mind even about God.

Such are examples of the lights which shine here. I do not say the apostle meant them, but they exhibit his idea.

Now the practical importance of these facts is sometimes very great. They bear in two directions. On the one hand, they warn us against being unduly distressed because these lights, and particularly the Bible, do not tell us all we want to know. Why will men find fault with the truth which has been made known because more is not made known? Because they have an exaggerated idea of what is possible under present circumstances, because they impute to the Bible, in particular, claims which it does not make. When you are given a guide book you do not expect it to be an encyclopedia. When you are given a compass you do not expect it to be a telescope. There are many things in relation to God and to ourselves about which we have as yet no means of information, and he who for that reason quarrels with what we may know, acts on a principle according to which he would not think of acting in any other sphere of life. For, on the

other hand, the light we have is real light, even though it do not illuminate all things. The candle does give some light even though it be not sunlight. Reason is trustworthy so far as it goes and when acting fairly. Conscience is an authority the commands of which we are bound to obey, though we must try to educate it. Above all, the Bible is true. The Christ whom it discloses is real. The life to which it points is the best. The knowledge of God which it gives is real knowledge. If a man can obtain fifty per cent of a bad debt he would better take it than take nothing; and the truths of reason, conscience, and revelation are not to be despised because they are not all we want to have. They are the lights we have to live by. We may trust so far as they shine, and that man does not seem to be a wise one who refuses to make the most of what he does possess.

All this, however, belongs to the negative aspect of the text. Let us now turn to the positive. If it be true that the lights we now live by are partial and imperfect, it is also true that a brighter light, yea, the brightest of all lights, is to take their place to the eye of the Christian believer. The ideal day is pictured by the apostle. It is a day without a sun. It is a day with-

out ending. It is a day of cloudless brilliance. These, as I have said, are emblematical expressions, pointing to the gloriously complete knowledge into which the believer is moving. He is ever advancing into the light. He sails eastward toward an ever-rising sun. With his entrance into the kingdom the light first broke upon his mind, and with his journey upward it grows in brightness, until at last he shall no longer know in part, but know as he is known. So John represents the fullness of Christian illumination in his picture of the holy city which has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. If now we translate this language into common prose, what are we to understand as the apostle's idea of the brighter light by which the lights we now live by are to be made unnecessary?

He evidently means first to represent by it the consequence of perfect fellowship of the soul of man with God. He pictures a life in which the thought is in absolute sympathy with God's mind, the heart in absolute accord with God's character, the will in absolute harmony with God's purposes. It is the life of those who in every part of their being have been reconciled to God,

not merely forgiven, but restored, and who dwell with Him not only in the sense of being citizens of His holy city, but in the deeper sense of being in personal communion with Him. This picture is but the symbolical representation of the perfection of that life which he claimed to be even now the portion of Christ's people when he said in his first epistle, "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Now we know that, even in secular affairs, when a man habituates himself to the study of any particular subject he attains an expert knowledge of it so that he is able to derive information from it which others never could derive, so that he sees at a glance the bearing on it of new facts and is able in turn to test alleged facts by it. We know likewise that through long and intimate association two friends may come to know each other's mind, almost to read each other's thoughts, to become, so to speak, merged in each other's life, till in a true sense they are no longer two, but one.

Every earnest Christian knows that something of the same sort takes place between himself and God. As he studies the Scriptures, as he habituates himself to prayer, as he learns more and more to think of God and to obey Him, as he meditates upon God's revealed character and will, he

obtains a knowledge of Him which is far more profound than intellectual knowledge, the knowledge which is born of sympathy, love, and coöperation. Thus Paul prayed that he might know Christ. Thus Christ said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." Even in this world we may find those in whose hearts God has been so manifestly revealed that we instinctively feel that they can lead us nearer to Him than any other channel can. It is the perfection of this experimental knowledge which I suppose the apostle to picture to us in the life of the new Jerusalem. There God will be intimately known. No doubt will be possible. No fear will ever cloud the consciousness of His presence. No rebellion will ever call for the strings of conscience to drive us back to duty. Love will be unfettered. God's love will be a perpetual sunlight answered in our love by a perpetual song of praise. The redeemed will know Him; and the helps to knowledge which before they used will be made needless by the personal fellowship and the increased appreciation of His fatherhood which, through the growth of their Christian lives, they should attain.

Now notice still more particularly the apos-

tle's language: "The glory of God did lighten it." Men have often imagined that the height of heavenly bliss will consist in what they have called the beatific vision, by which they mean that in some way to the purified spirits of the just the Infinite One, of whom it is said that He dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto, will be to their minds, as it were, visibly made manifest. I do not know whether this idea is true or false. But this is clear, that when the spirits of just men are made perfect, and when the soul is in every quality of its being reconciled to God, His excellence will appear transcendently real and supremely beautiful. This is His glory. His glory is a term used to express God's revealed excellence. We see it now in the wisdom made manifest even by nature, in the power shown by the creation and support of the universe, in the goodness of Providence, in the holiness of His moral law, in the righteousness of His dealing, and, finally, and most supremely, in the love of His redemption. To a believing mind this glory already appears, and I call you to witness, fellow-Christians, if as we advance in our spiritual life the glory of God has not become more beautiful, more real, more sublime, until it has become unspeakable.

But I dare appeal to the experienced knowledge of the universal Church, expressed in hymn and prayer and meditation, that the beauty and majesty, the greatness and the infinite goodness of God are truths which fill the mind with light, which quiet every dark inquiry, and shed profound peace upon the restless, needy soul of man. This light is to burn with greater and greater brightness until it shines in its full splendor in the soul of the redeemed.

Now to this he adds, "The Lamb is the light thereof." This crowns the picture. This unifies the description: for it tells us that the Redeemer will be forever and forever the medium by which God and man shall be made one. Evidently the Christian will never outgrow Christ. If he enters into the most intimate fellowship with God so as immediately to know Him, it will still be God in Christ that he will know. If the glory of God appear to him in supreme splendor it still will shine in the face and through the kindred glory of Jesus Christ. In Christ there dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead. He is and will ever be the revealer of God to man. It will always be true that he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father. Already the believer begins to see Christ's glory. Through Christ his fellowship on

earth with God is established. Through Christ the light breaks in upon his darkened mind. Unto all eternity God will become nearer because Christ does, God will become clearer and more beautiful as revealed in Christ, and the fullness of divine life and truth which is in Jesus will be the medium whereby the lights we now live by are eclipsed in the light of that love which Christ has revealed on Calvary, but with all eternity will never cease, and which all the ages will never cease to adore. I say the Christian will never outgrow Christ, but Christ will always be to him the way, the truth, and the life, the light not only of this world but also of heaven.

Such, according to my understanding of his words, was John's idea of the perfect light. He presents it as the ideal of the Christian's life, and what a worthy conception it creates of that blessed estate which awaits us beyond the grave! Does not this really tell us more about heaven than any literal description could do of the place where heaven is or of the way in which we shall there be employed? Do not all the fancies which the mind has ever devised seem poor in comparison with these broad, yet clear outlines of perfect spiritual life? These give us the moral realities of heaven, the principles on which life will there

be passed, the principles which it is important for us most to keep in mind if we would be meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. "To dwell with God, to feel His love, is the full heaven enjoyed above," and to every man who has begun to feel, that light within the mind is more important than light to the eyes. To every man who has begun to feel, that true life is a matter of the soul, not of the body, and God is the light and life of the soul; to all such will the apostle's description appear the very highest idea of heaven which can possibly be conceived.

But, you will now see, as I observed in the beginning, that the description of this ideal state touches very closely on our life now, so that heaven appears as only the attainment of that for which we all need to strive. This fellowship with God, this perception of His glory, this life with Christ, are begun on earth. Hence a new value is given to these very lights which are said to be eclipsed in a greater. I have said they are partial. They are not perfect. But now I add that by the use we make of them are we to prepare for what is better. The light of reason is often faltering and dim, but we are to use it now, and when joined with faith it will train our power and measurably direct our lives. Man will never cease

to be a reasoning being, and only in the perfect light of Christian experience reason will find its noblest opportunity. As an independent light it is insufficient, but in conjunction with the Spirit of wisdom it will realize its true worth. So conscience is to be enlightened and obeyed, and, above all, the Scriptures are to be used and trusted, fed upon and followed.

These are the lights for us to live by now. As we use them, the light of God Himself will break upon us. We are not to stumble at the fact that they do not give us all the knowledge we want, but are to use them so that they may lead our minds upward and onward. Thus heaven is to begin on earth. He who beheld the vision of it turns in effect to tell us, "Use well, use diligently the light that has been given you. Walk in the light. Obey Christ. Fill your minds with the truth that has been revealed, for these are the lights now made for us to live by, and while the future light will far surpass them, it will do so only for those who use them now and use them well."

Ah! we dream of heaven, but we do not realize that it must begin on earth. The traveler at night must follow the light which his guide holds, knowing that though it do not illumine the heavens, it

at least shows him the way, and that when night is past the sun will rise and the heaven be illumined. So he who follows the light of truth, which the Christ of the Bible holds in His hand, will tread the narrow way in safety here, and when the day dawns all the light he wants will be his. He will see it breaking, see it brightening, until at last he shall see it in all its heavenly splendor, when he shall need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God shall give him light that will never pass away.

VIII

THE WAITING DEAD

VIII

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"And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. . . . And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence."—GEN. l. 4, 5, 24, 25.

GENESIS closes with the account of the burial of two of its most illustrious characters, and we are impressed with the fact that men, whose ancestors had been called from a distant land to Canaan and who had there lived quiet and comparatively humble lives, were laid to rest amid the mourning and with all the honors of the court of Egypt. It seems to have been a splendid caravan which bore to the old tomb in Machpelah the remains of Jacob. He was escorted not by his sons alone, but by the chariots and horsemen

of Pharaoh. It was the burial of a prince. Gentile and Hebrew united to do reverence to the father of Joseph. The Egyptian court went into mourning. So large was the escort, so royal were the signs of grief, that the inhabitants of Canaan were moved by the spectacle to exclaim, "This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians."

When, many years later, Joseph in turn died, he was carried, doubtless, to his sepulcher with even greater pomp. If Jacob were worthy of such a funeral at the hands of Egypt, how much more was Joseph—the savior of their land! Joseph, indeed, was buried in Egypt. Jacob had lived there but a few years, and it was natural that his remains should be returned to the old home. But Joseph was identified with Egypt. According to the rites of Egyptian society was he laid to rest, followed by the gratitude and honor of both his kinsmen and the people and dynasty whom he had served so well. This first book of the Bible thus dismisses from its pages the sacred household of Abraham by laying upon the tombs of Jacob and Joseph the honorable tributes of heathen and believer alike.

You will note, however, that both these men died with their thoughts fixed on the return of Israel to Canaan, and with hopes built on the

promises made to Abraham. Joseph expressed his faith in words. Though to be himself buried in Egypt, he exacted an oath from his brethren, to be handed down to the time of the exodus, that they should carry his bones with them to the promised land. Not in Egypt would he rest, but in the land of promise, as though in his future tomb he would be able to share in the future glories of his people. Jacob expressed the same thing by his request for an immediate burial in Canaan. Canaan, not Egypt, was the home of Israel. There the promises of God were to be fulfilled; and it was the wish of Jacob to rest with Abraham and Isaac, in the hope, perhaps, that together they might rise to share in the joy of coming blessing.

These men died, therefore, in hope—Canaan was their home. Canaan was to be the possession of their children. Canaan was to witness the kingdom of the future, the glory of Israel, the advent of the promised Prince of peace. To them death, therefore, was but a season of waiting. They do not seem to have considered it as cutting them off from the traditional hopes of their race. Jacob in Machpelah, Joseph embalmed in Egypt, were but waiting for the time to come in the progress of events when in some way with their de-

scendants they should partake in the possession of the promised land.

The burial of the patriarchs, therefore, suggests the thought of the waiting dead, of the dead as waiting for something to happen whereby their own joys would be made complete. Thus the men of old times were gathered to their fathers, and thus we also lay our believing friends to rest. While the Bible sheds but little light upon the world beyond the grave, while it refuses to answer many questions that trembling voices raise, this representation of the dead as waiting is found in the New as well as in the Old Testament, and is meant to have practical influence upon us who are still alive. For what, for whom do they wait? And how?

The answer is, first, that they are waiting for the living. In what sense they thus wait is made evident by the expressed hopes of the patriarchs. As I have said, these men died thinking less, so far as is recorded, of their own happiness immediately after death and more of the blessing which one day was to come to their descendants. They do not seem to have thought that they would be by death excluded from it. They had themselves laid to rest, therefore, in the promised land. Therefore it was that Abraham bought

Machpelah from the sons of Heth. Therefore it was that Isaac and Jacob were laid in the same rocky sepulcher. Therefore Joseph gave commandment concerning his bones. They were looking to the future, not so much to the world beyond death itself as to the world which was to come on earth, to the fulfillment on earth of the promises to Abraham. They seem to have thought of death mainly as a resting with the fathers who were already dead until their children should have inherited the land and received the glory, and through the promised seed, the Shiloh, have become a blessing to all people.

Emphatically, therefore, these dead were waiting for the living.

Now it may be well just at this point to recall the few items of information concerning the state of the dead immediately after death which may be gleaned with tolerable certainty from the Scriptures. As I have said, the Scriptures reveal little more than a few general truths. What we may learn from them is rather in the way of correcting error than of disclosing possible information. To the old patriarchs the grave was even darker than it is to us. Little by little, however, light shone into it with the progress of revelation, until by Christ's resurrection life and immor-

tality have been brought to light; and though the grave be still in the twilight, though the forms there be shadowy, we may see enough to give us great joy and to add new force to the doctrine before us of the dead as waiting for the living.

Thus we may be certain that the dead are not unconscious. We say they are asleep, but we only mean that they seem to be. Their souls are not asleep. There is no break in the continuity of their life. The very phrase used in the Old Testament, that they have been gathered unto their fathers, would seem to imply this, for we hardly suppose it to mean merely that their bodies have been laid in the ancestral tomb. Twice the phrase is used when this was certainly not the case. At any rate, the revelations of later Scriptures made this perfectly certain. Who were those visitors from the other world whom the disciples saw talking with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration? They were Moses and Elijah, who years before had passed into the other world, and who there were evidently interested in the progress of events on earth, since they came to commune with the Christ for whom on earth they had looked. What was Paul's view of death, as he viewed the possibility of it

for himself? It was "to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better." That implies a conscious life immediately after death, so that we are not surprised to read in the Apocalypse of visions of the saints in glory or that at the end Jesus will return with ten thousands of His saints. The dead, therefore, are not unconscious; when we say that they are waiting we mean it literally, —they are expecting and looking forward to the object of their hope.

Then, again, we may be certain that the state of the dead is not one of probation. This was the idea of the wise man when he wrote, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." This is beyond doubt the reason why the Scriptures declare so emphatically that this life is a probation—"Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." "It is appointed unto men," we read, "once to die, but after this the judgment"; and at the latter men are to be judged for the deeds done in the body.

I know that the idea of a probation after death is now a favorite one, but it is held in the face of the whole drift of revelation. I think it altogether more Scriptural to abide by the view that

at death destiny is fixed; the children of God go to their place and the children of the Wicked One to theirs. This does not mean, however, that the reunion of the one or the misery of the other is complete. On the contrary, they are waiting, as we shall see. Only we may be sure that the believing dead,—for it is of these we are speaking,—do not wait in any uncertainty. Their lot is fixed. They rest in hope. They wait in peace. They are not passing through any more probation. All that is ended. Their struggles, their battles, are over. They rest from their labors. They are in Abraham's bosom. They are in the arms of Christ.

Now it almost necessarily follows from what has been said that the state of believers after death is one of complete happiness and entire holiness. It is just here that we lack much information that tearful eyes have sought to discover. But we recall again the words of the apostle, "To depart, and to be with Christ," and we are sure that to be with Christ is to be happy, that it is to be also holy,—for who could be in His presence in glory without being purified? That it is to possess more knowledge and power and joy than now we can well conceive. How could they rest from labors if not holy, when the

greatest object of their labors is to attain holiness?

But what the external conditions of existence are in this intermediate state we know not, and I have no wish to speculate. By what organs the soul shall take part in the life of that dim world we can only guess. That there, too, as on earth, there will be a process of growth and spiritual development in believers, we may fairly suppose, while admitting their sinlessness. That the absence of earth and flesh, and the presence of Christ and the glorified will give free play to the spiritual life of the soul, and will at once banish sin as well as temptation, sorrow as well as care, we seem to have reason to believe. Then are the spirits of just men made perfect, and the believer in Jesus may be laid to rest in the confidence that he has already entered into the joy of his Lord, has already tasted the sweets of his Saviour's presence, has already been blessed by entering into the life of the family of God.

Yet it is none the less true that the dead are waiting, and waiting for the living,—not restlessly, not unhappily, but eagerly and with vivid anticipation, we may suppose. Nor do I mean merely that they are waiting for the living to join them in the other world. No doubt this also is

true. They carry with them the remembrance of those they loved on earth, and doubtless will be glad to welcome them when in God's time they too are summoned hence. They wait, I doubt not, to see the harvest gathered from the seeds of love and truth which they sowed in the hearts of others, to see the fulfillment of the prayers perhaps whose answer they were not permitted to see on earth. They wait for the living, and if it be possible, they gladly join in the anthems of praise which give fresh glory to Christ as one and another of His people take their places in the happy throng.

But this is not the main sense in which they are said to be waiting for the living. This is not the sense in which we have spoken of Jacob and Joseph as waiting for their children. These patriarchs died in the hope, as I have said, of Israel's return to Canaan, of Israel's glory in the promised land, in the hope of the fulfillment on earth to Israel of all the promises of God. The great truth, therefore, is that the dead are waiting for the living to work out and establish, under God, the promised kingdom of Christ. What was it that Moses and Elijah were most interested in, if we may judge from their words at the Transfiguration? We read that they spoke of the decease

which Jesus was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Ah! they had been waiting in the other world for the coming of the Christ, for the promised glory to dawn on Israel in the flesh, for the great sacrifice for human sin to be offered. Did not Jesus say, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it,"—saw it doubtless from above,— "and was glad"?

Then do you not remember how Paul comforted the Thessalonian Christians by assuring them that those who had fallen asleep in Christ should rise first and share with the living in the future kingdom? He too, it is evident, thought of the dead as waiting for the providence of God and the toil of the Church to work out in the living world the appointed day of victory. So, finally, John makes us hear the souls of the martyrs crying unto God, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth"? We are told that white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. That is but a picture, made fearful by the lurid lights of the Apocalypse, of the Church above waiting for the mis-

sion of the Church on earth to be carried out. This, then, is the great idea which was in the mind of the patriarchs when they died: In death they were to wait for the living to fulfill the work of God for the generations following, to hasten on the consummation, waiting for the wheels of Providence to revolve, for the kingdom of the Christ to come; waiting for the living to receive the fulfillment of the promise in the faith of which they died. So thought the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, for he concludes his familiar catalogue of Hebrew believers with these words, "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they"—mark you—"that *they* without us should not be made perfect." The dead are waiting for the living to carry out the work of God.

Now this may put the facts before us in a somewhat unusual light, yet it is strange that we do not think of it oftener, so evidently is this the teaching of the Bible. We think of the dead as only waiting for us to go to them. Or we speak as if they had now lost interest in this world, as if they had laid all thought of earth aside with the tabernacles that they have left, as if they were now absorbed in the things of heaven and had

forgotten the sphere in which the best of God's redemption of man is being wrought out. But how impossible would this be! On the contrary, they are waiting more eagerly than we for the coming kingdom. Their supreme thought is of the fulfillment of the promises to Christ. We imagine that their lesson to us would be, "Prepare to die," but not so,—they would say, "Work while it is called to-day. Prepare to live. Double your energy, double your devotion, stop frittering away life in mere pleasure or gain, wait and work, as we worked and now wait, for the coming kingdom. Hasten by all that is in you the day of the Saviour's advent!"

Therefore I say that the thought of the sainted dead ought to be a grand inspiration to noble, active Christian living. How do you think they would live if they could again put on the armor or again handle the plow? Would they waste life in play? Would they doubt or falter? Ah, this is the message to us of the waiting dead! "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, . . . let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Paul would gladly have departed to be with Christ,—but he added, for me to remain is more needful for you. That is the true spirit,—there is work to be

done. There is God's great plan on earth to be carried out. There is Christ to be enthroned. There is redemption to be made complete. There is the promised land, not far away, but here in this world to be attained.

The sainted dead are waiting for us to help on this result, and if they can watch us here below, nothing, we may be sure, will give them so much joy as to behold us doing what we can to hasten the kingdom of Christ on earth. Sometimes men talk with reverence and affection of their departed loved ones and say they hope to join them in the better world; yet, forsooth, they continue to live under the influence of passion and pride, and absorbed in mere secular toil, as if this world and death had nothing to do with each other save that the former is the prelude of the latter, whereas always the opposite is true,—that world is a prelude to what this is to be. This world as it now is must become changed. Christ's kingdom must come in its fullness, and for this, I say, the dead are waiting—and waiting for us who are living to finish the work which they began.

Now, why do they wait for this? Are we to suppose that, when Jacob and Joseph were so anxious to have burial in Canaan, they had no thought of personally sharing with their posterity

in the blessings of the future? Was it mere sentiment which made them wish to find graves in the sacred soil? Was it because they thus sought to secure a place in the remembrance of their children? We cannot believe it. It seems clear that these patriarchs expected to enjoy the blessing also, that they expected to come from Machpelah some day and enjoy the promised land. So explicit had the Lord's word been to Abraham: "Seest thou this land? To thee will I give it and to thy seed." But it was not given to Abraham in this life; and so, I suppose, the patriarchs expected to come forth from the other world and partake in the glory of the kingdom which the promised Christ would establish.

This does not mean the restoration of Jews. This then adds something to our doctrine of the waiting dead. They are waiting for the living to fulfill the appointed work, and this because they are waiting in the expectation of taking part themselves in the kingdom of the future. What! you say, have not the sainted dead already obtained their reward? Are we to think of their bliss as incomplete? Are we not to console ourselves by the reflection that our loss is their gain; and that already they have entered into rest? Certainly we are; and I have already shown

some of the revelations made to us concerning their state. In the presence of Christ they do enjoy rest and peace. Their race is over. Their probation is finished. Their salvation is fixed. Lazarus in Abraham's bosom has indeed gained much after the life in which he sat as a beggar at the rich man's gate, and so likewise every dead believer is safe and free and happy. But at the same time there is now an intermediate state. There is far more awaiting them. They have not yet obtained the full reward; not yet entered into the full glory; not yet tasted the complete happiness of the world to come. It is not to detract from their present happiness that we thus speak, but rather to unroll before our thoughts the vision of still greater blessedness which awaits them. For they are waiting for the time when at the appointed signal they shall take their resurrected bodies,—shall join the descending Christ,—shall inhabit the city of God which John saw descending out of heaven; and then shall enter upon the everlasting state in which God's redemption of the world is to issue.

I want you to observe the place which the resurrection of the dead occupies in this plan of the Almighty. We think of it as an isolated event,—as a peculiar thing,—as something which

we may scarcely believe even on the credit of revelation. But if you will think of the resurrection as part of the great change which is to come over all this world in order to fit it for the future kingdom of Christ, it will appear less incredible because no longer isolated. There is to be, we are told, a new heaven and a new earth in which shall dwell righteousness. Society is to be reorganized under the dominion of the living Spirit of the reigning Christ. A new history is to be begun. The old is to pass away forever,—what are to be the enjoyments and employments of humanity then we do not know. But that we are warranted in expecting not merely an individual immortality but an immortality of society—of humanity—and that in this reorganized, redeemed race, men are to find their full opportunities for divine living of every kind, is a fact, I think, beyond reasonable question. The resurrection is to be the reclothing of human spirits for this new world and new life. As they have borne the image of the earthly, they shall also bear the image of the heavenly. And as in the state beyond the grave they have been made like Christ in soul, so, moreover, in the world beyond the judgment and the second advent, shall they be made like also unto His glorious body, according

to the power—and as part of the exercise of the power—whereby He is able (and is destined) to subdue all things unto Himself! We say, therefore, that the dead are waiting. The patriarchs on earth sought the city with foundations, the patriarchs in heaven are still waiting for it; and the patriarchs died in the hope that they too should share the promised inheritance,—and they shall, and we shall, and all the believing hosts shall,—for this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

I was impressed recently with a sentence which Frederick D. Maurice wrote in a letter to a friend soon after the burial of a beloved sister. Speaking of the burial service, he calls it "a glorious duty, for the more I think of the way in which the children of Israel asserted their right to the possession of Canaan, merely by burying their dead in it, and consider the exactness of the type in all particulars,—the more do I feel that everybody put into this earth is a new declaration that Christ is coming to claim the earth for His Church." That is true! They are waiting for the signal to return! They are waiting to take their places in the new world, to enter through the

gates into the city where the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of Christ; where there shall be no more curse; where they shall see His face and His name shall be in their foreheads; where the Lord God shall give them light, and they shall reign forever and ever.

Thus, then, Genesis closes with this suggestion of the waiting dead, and when the great patriarchs have been laid in their sepulchers, the history proceeds with the long record of their children's faltering progress toward the attainment of the hopes in which Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, died; and slowly the movement went forward till the Shiloh came, and now more grandly is it moving onward toward the second coming. We, my hearers, are the spiritual children of Abraham, and ours too is the patriarch's faith and hope. Therefore the multitude of the waiting dead should urge us on. As I have said, they cry to us not that we should come to them, but that we should, so to speak, hasten the time of their coming to us,—that we should live and work and hasten the glad end,—do what we can to make the new world in which they are to share with us. As you think of the cloud of witnesses, run your race! Doubtless you have loved ones there—sainted friends. "There are the good and blest,

those I love most and best." You are apt to think that your reverence for them should lead you merely to keep their memory green. But not so. Let the thought of them as waiting lead you rather to work and live more noble, more Christlike lives. This is the wish of the waiting dead. Should not the soldier, at sight of his dead comrade, turn more fiercely to the battle to win the cause for which his comrade died? Has not the grave of Livingstone in the heart of Africa quickened thousands of hearts to carry out the great missionary work? And when we think of those who believed and died not having received the promises, what shall we infer if not that we are more zealously to follow the road in following which they fell? O living men, heed, I pray you, the message of the dead! They being dead, still speak. Live true Christian, active, toiling lives. Press toward the promised inheritance, that with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with others whom we need not name, you should see in full glory the kingdom of God.

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